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Are we rolling?

THE BEST I CAN SAY IN pitiful mitigation of my frequently poor behaviour at the time is that in those days I was not easily embarrassed and usually up for anything, a sorry mix. Anyway, it's October 1976. Patti Smith's just released her new album, *Radio Ethiopia*. Because her relationship with the British music press has deteriorated badly since *Horses*, she's not doing any interviews but will instead be holding a press conference at the Intercontinental Hotel, near Hyde Park. At *Melody Maker*'s weekly editorial meeting some wag comes up with the fateful wheeze of sending me along with the intention of being as rowdily disruptive as possible, to see what kind of reaction such impoliteness might provoke. Seems like a plan to me.

So off I go, getting there early and hitting the bar.

"What do you want from me?!" Smith at the 1976 press conference with Lenny Kaye

She arrives late, looking like she's been dragged backwards by the heels through a hedge, her hand bandaged, the result of an accident the previous night at a gig in Paris. Said injury is evidence in her opinion that being in a rock band is like being in the army, which seems fairly preposterous to me. For reasons I can't recall, we are soon arguing about Blue Öyster Cult, the very mention of whose name has me rolling my eyeballs theatrically and muttering loudly enough for her to hear vague obscenities about poodle-haired short-arses. "My boyfriend's in Blue Öyster Cult," she snaps. "So don't start saying bad shit or I'll throw my food at you. Except for my boyfriend, they ain't the best-looking band in the world," she concedes reluctantly. "But they got the most stamina and heart, and they've lived like dogs."

This makes me laugh derisively and leads to a lot of fractious banter between us including some disparaging remarks about her guitar playing, my description of which as inept she takes raucous exception to. Seething, she picks up the plate of sandwiches in front of her and true to her earlier promise flings it at me. I duck and the plate bounces with an audible clang off the head of the guy sitting behind me, leaving a piece of lettuce on his forehead that he doesn't notice until I peel it off and slap him with it when he threatens to have me thrown out.

Patti, meanwhile, is loudly defending her new LP. "What do you want from me?" she screeches. "Tell me who you write for and I'll review the record. 'Radio Ethiopia', the cut itself, is a very sensitive, heartfelt and courageous voyage. It's us improvising alone in a dark studio with a hurricane coming, with the moon shitting on us."

This is colourful stuff... what else made her such a unique performer?

"Everything I have inside me, whether it's cosmic or telepathic or my knowledge about Egyptology or having a baby or being raped or beaten up, everything wonderful or horrible that's ever happened to me. The temple of my experience is my body, and that's what I use onstage." She then announces she's declaring war, presumably on the music press, or that part of it that's been recently so unkind to her, which makes us all sit up. "Call me the Field Marshall if it makes you feel better," she shouts. "I'm the Field Marshall of rock'n'roll. And I'm fucking declaring war! My guitar is my machine gun." And with this, she storms out, faithful retainers scampering in her turbulent slipstream. I'm back at the bar before she gets to the door.

As ever, enjoy the issue and if you want to get in touch you can email me at the usual address: allan_jones@ipcmedia.com

Allan Jones

INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring JIMMY PAGE'S *LUCIFER RISING* | NENEH CHERRY | BILL FAY

The Sutherland Brothers & Quiver

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FOUL-MOUTHED!

‘I can fuck like a dog and incite a riot!’

The astounding story of rock’s ultimate maverick, KIM FOWLEY. Here to plug his autobiography, keener to talk about “the penis of death”…

Photograph: Henry Diltz/Corbis

KIM FOWLEY IS 72, but you wouldn’t know it from the way he talks, or what he talks about. When he answers the phone in the middle of the Californian night it’s ostensibly to discuss his new book of autobiographical prose and poetry, *Lord Of Garbage*. But he’s soon riffing on just about anything – cancer and polio, his penis (“Big, with a head like a mushroom”), the best unsigned band in Newcastle (Lyxx) and his plans to make an answer to *The Runaways*, the 2010 film about the girl band he managed to stardom in the 1970s.

“That film didn’t show The Runaways as I recognised them,” he says. “So I’m making my own film about them, set in 2020, with my girlfriend, Snow Mercy. She’s a Betty Page lookalike, a dominatrix in the dominion dungeon of Los Angeles. I’m not a customer,” he adds. “I’m her man, the super-dom.”

The legendary songwriter and producer, who wrote novelty hits “Alley Oop” and “Nut Rocker” and worked with Slade, Cat Stevens, Warren Zevon and Frank Zappa, is inexhaustible. He has recently had an operation for bladder cancer, but that hasn’t slowed him down. He has seven films out this year, he boasts, along with a couple of albums, and has just returned from a European tour with Snow Mercy. “We showed up at the venue, met local musicians, wrote 10 songs, then played 90-minute shows, before going to the next town. People were vomiting and shitting in buckets while we played. My audience goes from schoolgirls asking me to draw them a picture of a penis to men who survived World War II.”

He’s also promoting his autobiographical book. “*Lord Of Garbage* is a book that is poetry in motion and prose that glows in the dark,” he says. “It’s the poetry I wrote when I was younger, and now I look back at 72 and explain what I was doing in my life at the time, whether it was crime, punishment, stardom, madness or disease. Generally, when you read a poem you don’t know what the poet is going through. Old ladies might read it and think it seems sweet, but the man who wrote it could be out there making love to middle-aged burn victims for money or breaking into houses.” Fowley, he boasts, holds nothing back. “This is

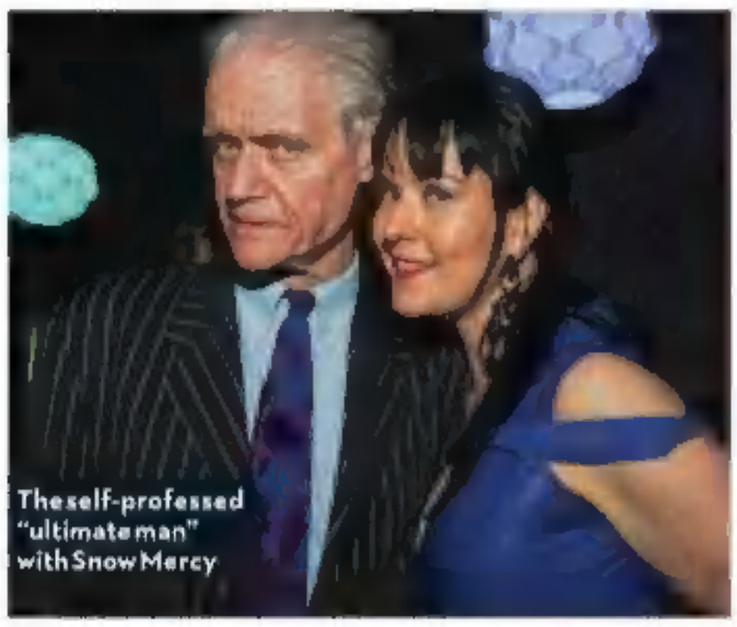
Teenage kicks: Kim Fowley and The Runaways, New Year’s Eve 1976, at the Whisky A Go Go in LA. Note amazing Sutherland Brothers & Quiver graffiti

INSTANT KARMA!

the book Iggy Pop would write, the one Leonard Cohen should have written."

Fowley began writing poetry in 1957, "the best year in rock'n'roll, and also the year I got polio for the second time. My polio came back as post-polio syndrome when I was 50, then I got bladder cancer in 2010. I began to write the book for Kicks Books, who also run Norton Records, while undergoing treatment. They stick needles and cameras down the penis hole and dig the tumour away. They do that every six months for five years. So I have polio, positional vertigo and the penis of death but still get more done than most people. I go in the hospital and am on morphine with bladder bags and blood and pus everywhere, and get on the phone to the voicemail of Kicks and rattle away."

It's an unusual method, but a productive one; Fowley has produced three volumes of his unorthodox memoir. "I overwrote, but everything I do is over-the-top," he admits. Eight poems have been turned into songs by Mick



The self-professed "ultimate man" with Snow Mercy

"The poets you read could be out there making love to middle-aged burn victims for money"

Collins of The Dirtbombs, and will be released on two EPs by Norton Records. The title of the book comes from a song on Fowley's cult 1968 *Outrageous* album, "Up/Caught In The Middle/Down". "Garbage means filth, sleaze, pain, horror and suffering. Somebody has to be the cheerleader for those emotions, so why not Kim Fowley, the ultimate man? I'm the only author I know who can do prose, poetry, fuck like a dog, incite a riot and write a song that will either make you drink a beer, have an orgasm or smile."

Fowley has already held an eventful reading in Brooklyn, where he performed with ? And The Mysterians, Reigning Sound and The Sonics, and intends to bring his particular brand of lunacy to the UK. "I will do readings hopefully in fetish environments, wherever there is burlesque, erotic leather and latex. It won't be a polite reading. I'll read while somebody is shooting up heroin or fist-fucking their girlfriend. It'll probably be more interesting than the Olympics."

PETER WATTS

***Lord Of Garbage** by Kim Fowley is published by Kicks Books and is out now*

Find more issues at magazinesdownload.com

"This is all about busting some jazz cherries!"

Neneh Cherry rolls back the years and lets rip again...

Cherry, right, with Rip Rig + Panic, Ladbroke Grove, 1981

NENEH CHERRY WAS recently hanging out with her old friend Tessa Pollitt from The Slits. "We were trying to figure out how I got involved with the London punk scene," she laughs. "I met Tessa, and then Adrian Sherwood, and then The Pop Group. Then Gareth Sager and Bruce Smith left The Pop Group to start Rip Rig + Panic and they rang me up, wanting me as a singer. I'd barely sung in my life. But I gave it a go..."

In many ways, Cherry's new album, *The Cherry Thing* – recorded with Scandinavian punk-jazz trio The Thing – revisits her early-'80s career that long predates her spell as the chart-topping star behind "Buffalo Stance" and "7 Seconds".

"It's a complete revisitation," she says. "That scene had a huge impact on me. I was only 15 when I moved to England and got involved with those guys. And it's a circle I needed to close."

The Cherry Thing also pays tribute to her stepfather, legendary cornet player Don Cherry. Alongside songs by Suicide ("Dream Baby Dream"), The Stooges ("Dirt") and Tricky ("Too Tough To Die"), *The Cherry Thing* features a version of Don Cherry's "Golden Heart".

"He died in 1995, and that hit so hard that I couldn't even listen to his music for years. When Mum died three years back, that was even worse, and it brought back all these unresolved emotions about Don. So it was important to revisit his music."

Together with her husband, producer Cameron McVey, and their two children, Cherry moved from Camden to Stockholm seven years ago, and kept a low profile. She presented a BBC cookery show in 2007 with her best friend Andrea Oliver (also a Rip Rig + Panic alumna), but made little music. It was Conny Lindström, a journalist, club-owner and "cheerleader" for Stockholm's unique jazz scene, who introduced Cherry to The Thing, a trio comprising Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and Norwegians Ingebrigt Håker Flaten (double bass) and Paal Nilssen-Love (drums). Cherry was blown away, and suggested they work together.

"You don't get many jazz bands like The Thing. They play songs by PJ Harvey and The White Stripes, and collaborate with Thurston Moore. After our first spell in the studio I came out with a migraine. It was that hardcore!"

Cherry will be touring with The Thing this summer, but anyone requesting "Manchild" might be disappointed.

"They'll just have to eat that! This tour is all about turning some heads, winning people over and busting some jazz cherries."

JOHN LEWIS

***The Cherry Thing** is released by Smalltown Supersound on June 18*

ALEX HINCHCLIFFE; GETTY IMAGES; DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS

Neneh and Mats Gustafsson do their jazz... Thing

What's the frequency, Kenneth?: Page releases his magickal soundtrack at last...

FIRST LISTEN

Jimmy Page's Lucifer Rising

Hell freezes over: the dark lord's lost album is finally released

ON MARCH 20, the spring equinox, Jimmy Page made available to order, on vinyl only, his long-suppressed and much-bootlegged 1972 soundtrack to *Lucifer Rising*. There would be a special run of 418 numbered copies (£30), his website announced, with the first 93 also signed (£195). The figures were auspicious: 418 is the kabbalistic number for the magic word "Abrahadabra", according to Aleister Crowley; 93 is the kabbalistic sum of the Greek words for "love" and "will" – Crowley's shorthand for "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

For those who have spent at least part of the last 40 years looking for magical significance in everything Jimmy Page has done, the whole event is – though this may not be strictly the right word – a Godsend. When the vinyl copies of *Lucifer Rising* finally arrive (standard edition: £20), you can read Page's sleevenotes about creating music for Kenneth Anger's movie; a score which was used on a preview print and then ditched in favour of Bobby Beausoleil's original soundtrack (Beausoleil had been imprisoned by then, for his part in the Manson murders).

Page contextualises his compositions as part of a long-term "interest in underground everything", dating as far back as The Yardbirds' "Glimpses". "The fact that I got involved," he concludes, "was really just a step along the road of my interest in the extreme and alternative."

Listening to these unusual recordings now, one of the many questions which arise is why Page has released so little music in the past three decades, and why this enduring avant-garde interest has manifested itself so rarely in public. *Lucifer Rising* features six tracks, with the first side taken up by "Lucifer Rising – Main Track"; a superb ritual piece that begins, as Page notes, with "a bass tanpura that provides a majestic drone".

Slowly and methodically, after about five minutes Page starts thickening out the sound, with some murky chanting and a bowed guitar sound. Forlorn waves of flute-like Mellotron give way to a fat and abrasive ARP synthesiser line, with discordant bass frequencies. The overall effect is much nearer in spirit to, perhaps, Terry Riley, John Carpenter and Sunn O))) than to blues-rock.

After about 14 minutes, there is a booming flutter of tablas, and the whole processional steps up a notch, with acoustic guitar in there, too. The ARP "provided the Horns of Jericho," writes Page. Side Two comprises five shorter tracks, culminating in a reprise of the main theme, "Lucifer Rising – Percussive Return". "Incubus" is a scrabbling treated guitar piece that recalls Derek Bailey, while "Damask" has a similar restless nature, but this time with a bowed guitar and an Indian bent explained by the scholarly Page as "a simple homage to the sarangi".

It would be easy to write about all this in the context of grim transgressive acts and so on, but happily *Lucifer Rising* works just fine as music above and beyond the somewhat gothic signifiers. If you've ever wanted the breakdown in "Dazed And Confused" to fill an album, *Lucifer Rising* should find a place in your collection.

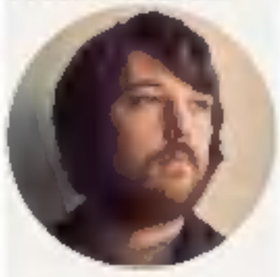
JOHN MULVEY

*The standard edition of **Lucifer Rising** is available from www.jimmypage.com*

A QUICK ONE

➤ In spite of the organisers' best efforts, **Keith Moon** will not be attending the Olympic opening ceremony. **Roger Daltrey** confirmed on US TV that the drummer had been invited, telling Jimmy Kimmel, "Our manager sent an email back saying, 'He currently resides at Golders Green Crematorium, where he's been for the last 34 years.'"

➤ As his old bandmate Josh Tillman's career flourishes, Fleet Foxes frontman **Robin Pecknold** is making a more eccentric career



move. His next project is to score *The Internet - A Blog Cats WTF Universe*, a film, about a "LOLcat caption writer", directed by Matt Daniels and Pecknold's brother Sean - if they raise enough funds on Kickstarter.com.

➤ **Robert Plant** steps out with The Sensational Shape Shifters (mostly players from Justin Adams' African/rock band Juju), at Gloucester Guildhall (May 8), London HMV Forum (July 12) and WOMAD (July 29). Patty Griffin joins in at the Gloucester and London shows.

➤ Some good stuff scheduled for Antony Hegarty's **Meltdown** festival in August, with **Laurie Anderson**, **William Basinski** and, best of all, the long-awaited return of **Elizabeth Fraser**. For full details – and for updated news, reviews and daily blogs – check out www.uncut.co.uk.

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NEW DIRECTIONS HOME...

FREE CD!

A track-by-track guide to your free CD of the month's best new music

1 COLD SPECKS
Winter Solstice
Taking her name from Joyce's *Ulysses*, Cold Specks is a vehicle for 24-year-old Canadian Al Spx, whose songs draw on some of the same blues influences as PJ Harvey – whose longtime collaborator Rob Ellis helps out here, too.

2 OBERHOFER
Landline
Brooklyn-based Brad Oberhofer's debut album, *Time Capsules II*, brims with youthful exuberance, the ambition of his mini-symphonies such as "Landline" lent sophistication by veteran producer Steve Lillywhite.

3 TY SEGALL & WHITE FENCE
I Am Not A Game
Nuggets-inspired psych-garage from the prolific Segall and Tim Presley. Clattering drums, squalling guitars and a wigged-out jam that manages to sound like a perfect pop song at the same time.

4 DEXYS
You
"Keenly anticipated" doesn't come close. And, astonishingly, after a 27-year wait, Dexys second coming doesn't disappoint. Kevin Rowland sounds as soulful as ever on this Willie Mitchell-style track from the comeback album of the year.

5 SLOW DOWN, MOLASSES
Late Night Radio
Tyson McShane's Saskatoon post-rock collective construct a towering wall of sound on this soaring track – no surprise, really, when the sleeve of the band's second album lists no fewer than 16 members.

Second coming: Celtic soul brother Kevin Rowland

6 WEIRD DREAMS
Vague Hotel
Beach Boys vocals and swooning guitars as Doran Edwards and his East London quartet revive jangle-pop's finest traditions on a vivid track from a debut album painted in pop's primary colours.

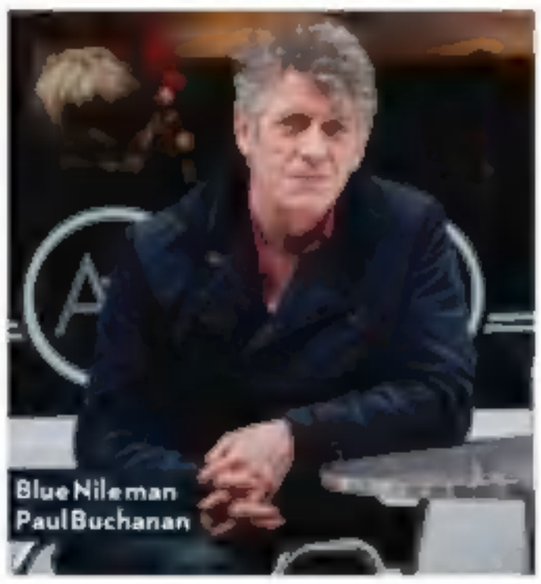
7 POND
Elegant Design
Sparklingly produced by Dave Fridmann, Zep-funk meets MGMT on this track from the Australian psych-rock band, who feature three members of Tame Impala.

8 THE WALKMEN
Heaven
The lead single from the New York-based quintet's seventh album juxtaposes a jangling two-chord riff, fizzing tempo and vaulting chorus with the desperate longing of Hamilton Leithauser's vocal.

9 GIANT GIANT SAND
Forever And A Day
Howe Gelb's Giant Sand expand in personnel and name on their umpteenth release. He describes this album highlight as "a yard sale of one man's life in flux, shoving all his stuff into the hands of anyone who will nab it."

10 ALASDAIR ROBERTS & MAIRI MORRISON
Ailein Duinn
Hailing from Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, Morrison takes centre-stage on this traditional song (it means "Dark-Haired Alan"). As a mere lowlander, Roberts assumes a supporting role among the glorious accompanying ensemble.

11 CORNERSHOP (FEAT KATIE)
Solid Gold
The mainstream swiftly forgot about Cornershop after Fatboy Slim's "Brimful Of Asha" remix.


Blue Nile man Paul Buchanan

INSTANT KARMA!

Tjinder Singh meanwhile has gone on making great music – including this infectious 2011 download, which finds a place on their *Urban Turban* album.

12 PAUL BUCHANAN
My True Country
Melancholic grace from the Blue Nile man, as he murmurs and sighs his way through a song from his solo debut – not about his native Scotland but a wistful panegyric to a world of dreams "*far above the chimney tops*".

13 SPACIN'
Sunshine No Shoes
Jason Killinger comes from the same Philadelphia stable as Purling Hiss – and you can hear it in his band's mangled graft of Velvets chug and Stones insouciance.

14 I SEE HAWKS IN L.A.
I Fell In Love With The Grateful Dead
Even before we heard it, we knew this song belonged on an *Uncut* CD. Fortunately, the track from the Californian country-rockers' fifth album turned out to be as irresistible as its title promised.

15 HUSKY
History's Door
Husky Gawenda's folk-pop quartet have positioned themselves as a kind of Antipodean Fleet Floxes, and the depth of their songwriting is evidenced by the rumour that this dreamily evocative song wasn't even on the album until their label demanded a single.

16 CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD
Rosalee
The Black Crowes singer, laidback and liberated – and fusing the spirit of the Allmans and the Dead on a country-funk beauty from his new band's debut.

Flute force: McNair onstage with Donovan *(not pictured)*, at the Woburn Music Festival, August 7, 1968

AND ON FLUTE... HAROLD McNAIR

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Jamaican jazz flautist Harold McNair – who also played alto and tenor sax – was the reedsman of choice for many top '60s UK recordings sessions; he was talent-spotted by Charles Mingus on a trip to London. Later, McNair often worked with composer and arranger John Cameron, on Donovan's albums, and notably, supplied the flute for Cameron's soundtrack to Ken Loach's *Kes*. He died of lung cancer in March 1971, aged 39.

KEY SESSIONS Donovan's "Catch The Wind", "Sunny Goodge Street", "Mellow Yellow" and "Hurdy Gurdy Man". McNair also wrote the arrangement for "There Is A Mountain" and played flute on many of Donovan's album tracks, as well as figuring on LPs by John Martyn (*The Tumbler*), Davy Graham (*Large As Life And Twice As Natural*), Magna Carta (*Magna Carta*) and Caetano Veloso's self-titled London album. McNair subsequently played with Ginger Baker's Air Force and also notably supplied tenor sax on the theme tune to the James Bond film, *Dr No*. *PHIL KING*

DEAN CHALKLEY; RICHARD CAMPBELL; RICHARD LAKE

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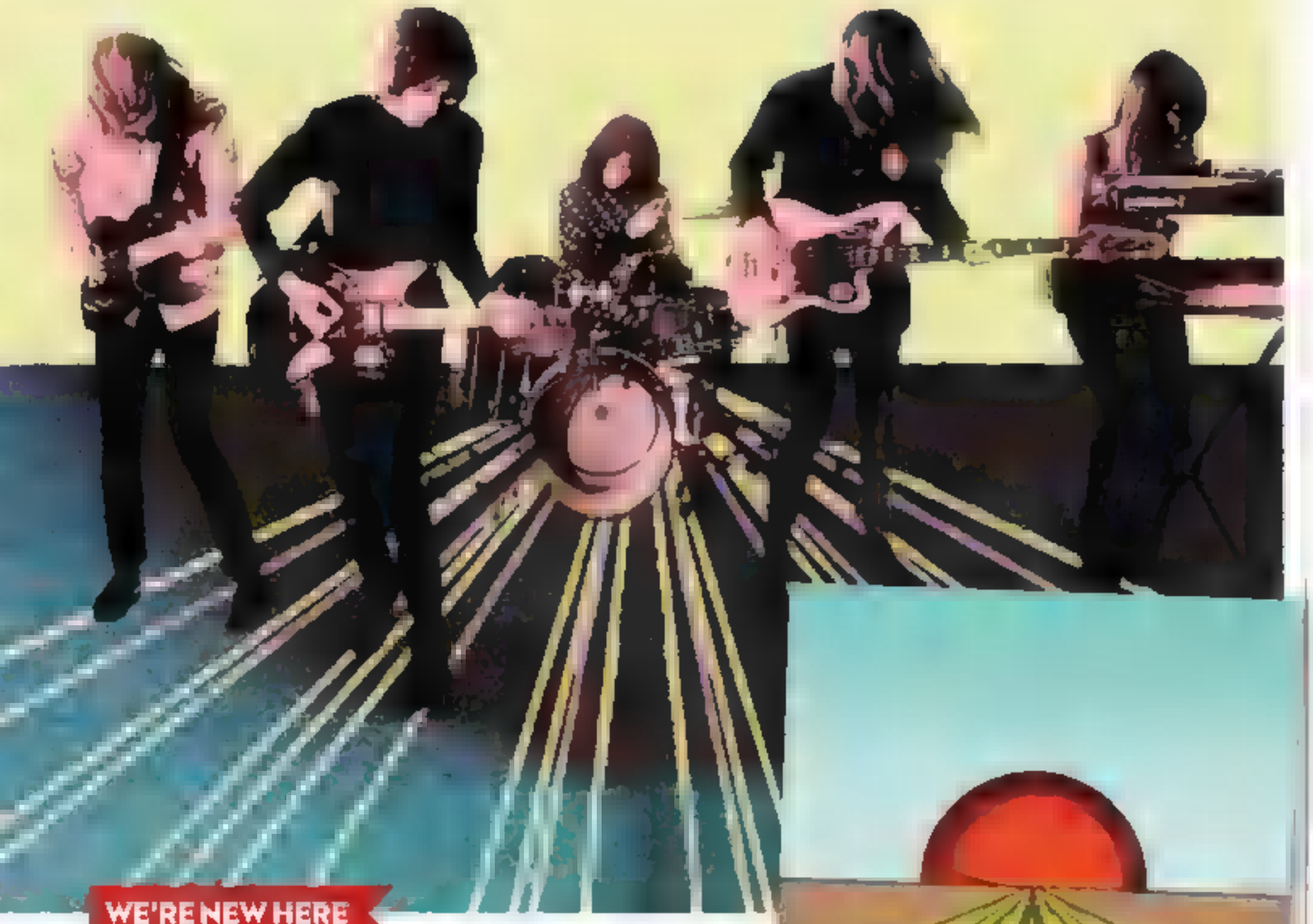
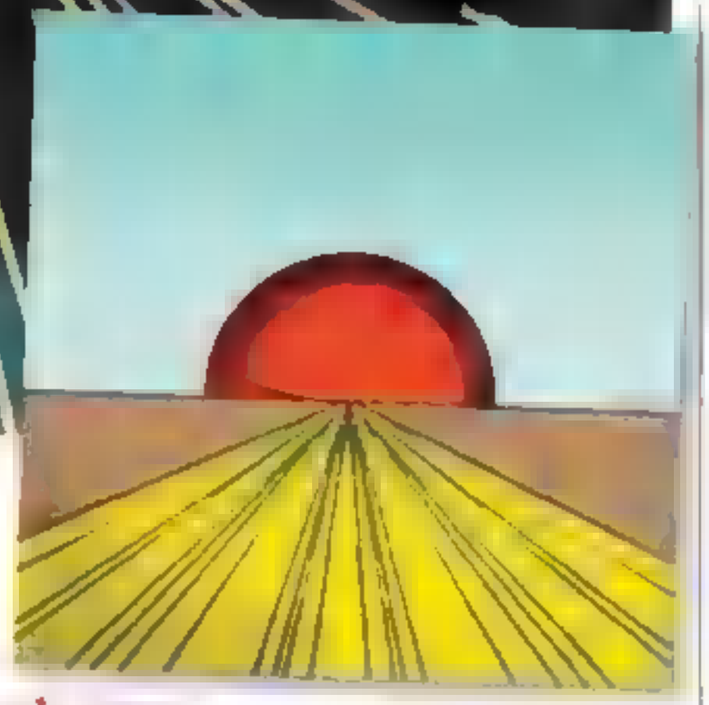


Playtime has begun: Toy (l-r) Dominic O'Dair, Tom Dougall, Charlie Salvidge, Maxim Barron, Alejandra Diez



WE'RE NEW HERE

Toy

Recommended this month: London's new kings of the freak-out. Now we're motoring...

ANYONE AFTER A mission statement from Toy would do as well to check out one of their photographs instead. It's not that the London quintet are short of opinions, but rather that their look – (very) long hair, roll-necks – so accurately reflects their artistic intent. As well as resembling a long-lost Krautrock band from the early '70s, they also dance to the beat of one.

As the title of their latest (second) single suggests, Toy's trademark is the motorik groove, which propels their hallucinatory songs – all swirling dynamics and roaring, densely layered fx – into the realm of the epic. Not that "Motoring" entirely defines their sound. Toy may be fans of Neu!, but their songbook also points to an appreciation of My Bloody Valentine, Cocteau Twins, The House Of Love and *Daydream Nation*-era Sonic Youth.

"We like all kinds of different music," vocalist/guitarist Tom Dougall agrees. "We don't sit around listening to Neu! the whole time. We're really into things that are genre-defining, but as long as something is good, then it doesn't really matter what it is. Some way down the line, we're keen to make something instrumental and really weird, but we're interested in the structure of pop songs. I like the idea of a song where the gears shift as it goes along, where it doesn't have to fall into the verse-chorus pattern."

An interest in instrumental weirdness isn't quite what you'd expect from a former member of once stratospherically hyped indie-pop outfit Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong, whose 2008 debut LP was shelved just weeks before its scheduled release. Dougall was the first to jump ship, followed by Toy's guitarist Dominic O'Dair and bass player Maxim Barron. "Obviously, it's our music this time," says Dougall, explaining the radical sonic shift. "Then, it was Joe's and he was fixed on trying to make really catchy, straight-up pop songs. That's what his passion was and it wasn't really ours."

Toy's passions are rather their 1979 Korg Delta synthesiser, and – as last year's debut single "Left Myself Behind" suggested – their drive for liberation through music. As Dougall sees it, "I don't think there's a better time for people to need escape, considering the gloomy atmosphere of the past few years. Transcendence is definitely one of the things we'd like people to experience."

SHARON O'CONNELL

I'M YOUR FAN

"Toy are everything a great band should be – heavy, loud and freaked-out. It's just all of my favourite things."

Rhys Webb, The Horrors

PIETER M VAN HATTEM

Toy play the Field Day festival in London Victoria Park on June 2. "Motoring" is out now on Heavenly

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

On the stereo this month...

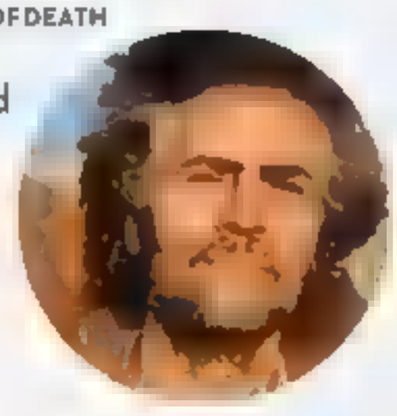
THE TY SEGALL BAND
Slaughterhouse
IN THE RED
The Cali garage rocker's domination of the *Uncut* stereo continues with his second LP of 2012: frantic, melodic psych-punk, mostly.

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
Honeycomb/Gotham
DOMINO
Ecstatic first glimpses of AC's upcoming ninth, follow-up to 2009 *Uncut* Album Of The Year, *Merriweather Post Pavilion*.

BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY
Hummingbird EP
SPIRITUAL PAJAMAS
Lots of Will Oldham reissues pending, but these new takes on Merle Haggard and Leon Russell songs are terrific.

SPACIN' Deep Thuds
RICHIE RECORDS/TESTOSTER TUNES
Invigoratingly fuzzy blend of Big Star, the Velvets and Krautrock, with highlight "Sunshine No Shoes" on this month's free CD.

THE FLAMING LIPS
The Flaming Lips & Heady Fwends
WARNER BROS/LOVELY SORTS OF DEATH
An elaborate album of collaborations for Record Store Day, co-starring Bon Iver, Nick Cave, Yim Yames, Yoko Ono and, er, Chris Martin.



ICEBREAKER WITH BJ COLE Apollo
CANTALOUPE/NAXOS
Eno's ambient masterpiece rescored by the hefty classical ensemble, with the UK pedal steel maestro providing requisite interstellar strafe.

GO-KART MOZART
New World In The Morning WESTMIDLANDS
Lawrence finally signals the arrival of *On The Hot Dog Streets* with – what else? – a Roger Whittaker cover.

LAETITIA SADIER
Silencio DRAGCITY
A mellow, enveloping extension of the Stereolab aesthetic, with unexpected guest spot from fellow 'Lab alumnus Tim Gane.

TORTOISE
Millions Now Living Will Never Die
THRILL JOCKEY
A useful reissue for this Chicago post-rock landmark from 1996. "Djed", more than ever, sounds like the scene's crowning moment.

JIMMY PAGE AND ROBERT PLANT
Unledded: No Quarter FONTANA
Lengthy graft on our Led Zep *Ultimate Music Guide* prompted a surprise re-evaluation of this bejewelled curate's egg, from 1994.

For regular updates, check our blogs at www.uncut.co.uk and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter

Fay: rediscovering lost chords

Be Not So Fearful...

The auspicious return of a great English singer-songwriter, BILL FAY

"YOU CAN'T MAKE a comeback album," says Bill Fay, "if you never arrived in the first place." It is now 45 years since the London singer-songwriter released his debut single, "Screams In The Ears"/"Some Good Advice", on Deram. Two remarkable albums followed in the early '70s: one, *Bill Fay* (1970), an idiosyncratic chamber pop album, with scuffed affinities to work by Scott Walker and David Ackles; the second, *Time Of The Last Persecution* (1971), an extraordinary collection of meditations on the apocalypse, recorded with some of London's wilder jazz players.

Neither album sold many copies. Nevertheless, Fay should have been set fair for a cult career akin to that of Robert Wyatt. It was not until the early 21st Century, however, that he became a name to drop for the likes of Jim O'Rourke and Jeff Tweedy. A stunning album recorded in the early '80s, *Tomorrow, Tomorrow & Tomorrow*, finally surfaced in 2004, and in 2010 it became apparent Fay had been covertly making music all along, when a 2CD set of home demos, *Still Some Light*, was released on Coptic Cat, the label of Current 93's David Tibet. While working a long string of temporary jobs ("Tomato or cucumber-picking, working in the parks..."), Fay quietly amassed a stockpile of songs and musical ideas. "It's just something that happens," he says. "It's natural, like going for a walk. Or breathing. I don't write songs for them to end up on a record, I just write them."

Fay appears to be one of those dedicated but undemonstrative artists who feel little pressure to expose their work. A 2007 live appearance with Wilco, singing his "Be Not So Fearful", pushed him closer to the spotlight, however, and finally, last year, a Californian producer called Joshua Henry (a childhood friend of Joanna Newsom) coaxed Fay back into a North London studio to record *Life Is People*, which will finally be released this summer.

"I couldn't imagine anything better," Fay says of the album. The somewhat unlikely core band is anchored by Weller and Oasis vet Matt Deighton, who discovered Fay's original records when his brother was looking after David Tibet's cats. If some of the arrangements and production touches feel a little like those on a Richard Ashcroft solo record, the wondering and humane way in which Fay constructs songs and performs them is still striking. For the outstanding "Never Ending Happening", he found himself playing piano "crosshand, which I hadn't done for about 50 years, since I was 16 or 17. I was trying to play normally and rediscover chords that I hadn't played for a long time."

"I don't write songs for them to end up on a record, I just write them"

Old friends turn up on *Life Is People*, too. Ray Russell, pivot of Fay's 1971 band, adds simmering guitar to "City Of Dreams"; and while Fay tackles Wilco's "Jesus Etc" alone, Jeff Tweedy turns up for a buoyant duet on "This World".

"It came from a 15-year-old home recording, from when I'd just got a little keyboard with a sequencer on it," explains Fay. "When I heard it properly and sang it with the band, I felt like I was singing with Wilco. What the band have achieved is tremendous."

JOHN MULVEY

Life Is People *is released on Dead Oceans, August 20*

STEVE GULLICK; KIRSTY RIDLEY

DAVID QUANTICK

Stop me,

if you think you've heard this one before

POPULAR MUSIC HAS always been based on sex, good looks and glamour. Older readers may recall a shot of George Harrison captioned, "Relax, girls, he's single!" Of course, in the world of proper rock, this attitude doesn't apply, so much so that I keep expecting photos of my favourite stars to have, "Relax, girls, he's married!" written beneath them. We don't judge our favourite cult heroes by their looks, which is just as well. In the world of authentic rock, pretty lads grow beards to look rougher and attractive ladies hide their winsomeness behind a giant zither.

You see artists make the transition from sexy to cult. Adam Ant now resembles Jack Sparrow's uncle. Kate Bush favours huge jumpers and sings from underneath a slanket, possibly. David Bowie, still more attractive than some species of songbird, stays at home. Sexiness becomes a hindrance to the serious artist, which is why Bob Dylan now dresses like his own cheap waxwork and Joni Mitchell positions herself as the angriest headmistress in the world.

Even Tom Jones, whose entire career has been based on demonstrating to the world what a sexy penis would sound like if it could sing, has entered the world of anti-sex. He no longer dyes his hair or wipes his brow with ladies' undergarments. Now following a unique path – equivalent to, say, Johnny Cash dividing his time between recording murder ballads and being a judge on *American Idol* – Jones reminds us with his new, elder statesman look that he is a serious artist for whom the pop mags are a distant, frivolous memory.

It wasn't always that way, of course. Once, frustrated by his refusal to answer any of my questions the way I wanted him to, I asked Tom Jones what it was like to be a sex symbol. He fixed me with a stern glare. "That to me," he said, "is like being asked by a cripple what it's like to walk." Hard to argue with that, really.

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Dr John

Interview: John Robinson
Photo: Michael Wilson

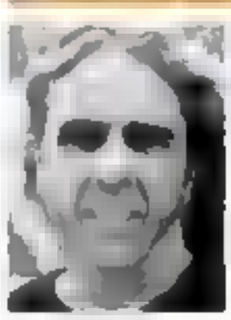
The Night Tripper tackles your queries on his eventful life, from the dangers of Methadone and the benefits of N'awlins voodoo to biting off chickens' heads...

FOR OVER 40 YEARS, he's been a Doctor, but really Mac Rebennack – the 71-year-old musician who performs as Dr John – is rather more stately than any normal physician. His hat at a jaunty angle, his walking stick rattling with eclectic souvenirs, a cheroot at his lips, he seems more like a visiting dignitary from some incredibly exotic foreign clime.

Which isn't really an incorrect impression. A man with deep roots in New Orleans music and also the city's spiritual culture, Dr John's worldview is as unique as his life experience – ex-junkie; ex-con; ex-guitarist – is alarmingly wide. At our meeting in his central London hotel, Mac is a man entirely on his own wavelength but who happily receives any enquiry on that frequency.

For all he is a good interview, music is how Dr John communicates, and it's a language he's been evolving since he started out over 50 years ago. "I was taught as a studio musician to be aware, and to play all music the best that you could play it, whether you're familiar with it, or even if you don't like it, play it to the best of your ability," he says today. "And that's a code I still live by."

Dr John carries out his rituals – in your auntie's curtains, perhaps



When we were recording *The Sun, Moon & Herbs* album in London, you put a gris-gris cross on my head. What is it, and what does it do?
Bobby Whitlock, Derek And The Dominos

Well, it's a blessing, and any blessing is good. But, for Bobby's information, I thought it would be a good idea for Bobby: he was playing with Eric (*Clapton*)'s band when they was Derek And The Dominos. I thought Bobby was a good singer and a good musician, but he just needed to have something called... perseverance. Because I could see he was going two ways at once.

How did you end up in prison?
J Gerard, via email

I was arrested for narcotics. In those days, there wasn't rehabs or the places you can go today. In some ways I think I was blessed to go to a federal joint rather than a state joint, because they treated you better, though I can't say that for a fact, because I never went to a state joint. Listen, I'll tell you this. Prisons are not made for the betterment of people – all they teach you is how to be a better criminal. There are more people in prisons in the USA than there ever was, and that's mainly because of drugs. It's not a smart idea, to put people in drug culture in prisons. There are alternatives.

How do you rate Hugh Laurie's piano playing?
Phil Newman, Brighton

I thought he played good. My little friend here [*assistant/girlfriend, Susie*] turned me on to Hugh Laurie – her friend knew his friend and whatever, and all of a sudden, I went to do a record with him in LA. He sent me a recording with Bessie Smith singing a soul song, and I cut it [*for Laurie's debut album, 2011's Let Them Talk*], and it was cool, and he played piano on it and that was cool, too. When things happen like that, it's spiritual.

What did you think of working with all us Brits on that *Anutha Zone* album?
Paul Weller

I liked that album a lot. Paul Weller turned me on to a song that was by a guy from Scotland, and I really loved that song ("Don't Want To Know", by John Martyn). It's a good mantra: if we don't know about evil we can put it off to the side and know about good things. It's what we should all strive for. Jason Pierce and me – we were meant to be arguing. There's certain people in my life I was meant to argue with, and he's one of them – I loved to argue with him. We would have the best arguments – I would feel exhilarated afterwards. It's a positive argument. If anyone tape-recorded our conversations, they would think we belonged in mental institutions. What's the name of his band? Spiritualized! I shouldn't forget a name like that!

Not many people know you had a hip-hop phase. What's the story behind "Jet Set" (1984)?
Dr R Hallett, Leeds

A guy that was playing congas with me, his name was Duke Bootee. I said, "You're not going to make any real money doing that. Your best shot is producing records, you're good with that..." he had helped with something or other. So he did that, and he did start producing records. He wrote "*It's a jungle out there, sometimes it makes me wonder...*" And it was Grandmaster Flash's first hit. He wrote some other songs for other artists and he had a string of hits and he was doing well as a record

CHRIS WALTER; COCO CARMEL

"There's only two
kinds of music –
good and bad –
and if I like
something, I'll
roll with it. If I
don't, then I ain't
gonna roll..."

A colourful Drin concert, 1973; above right, enjoying an argument with Jason Pierce, Manhattan Studios, NYC, March 3, '96. Below, the back sleeve of Locked Down, showing the [illegible] complete with teeth and bones

producer, and I felt real proud that I'd helped push him along, to that. And he did a track, and I thought, 'Yeah!'. There's only two kinds of music; good and bad, and if I like something, I'll roll with it. If I don't, then I ain't gonna roll.

You quit drugs after 40 years using. Was that a relief?
Guy Parfect, Chichester
I felt a sense of relief whenever I had to go through customs, through borders. For 19 years I used to carry a little metal fishing box with letters in it from the US government saying I was a Methadonian. But you got to consider, where did a drug like this come from? Methadone maintenance became a trap – they just wanted to keep people on it. My first wife, she died as a result of being on Methadone for 37 years. She was all crippled up, and that's not a good thing.

"I got shot in this finger. I can still play guitar... but I forget this finger don't work, so it just goes 'bonk'..."

records. I liked that we had to do the whole record at the same time, there was no overdubbing – we recorded on one track. They were all recorded with Cosimo Matassa – he was a real hip engineer. He had got into the idea that mic placement was so important, so he would tell, like, a saxophone player to get up to the mic when he took a solo and the trumpet player would play at an angle to the mic, or whatever. He got the best sounds all of the time.

What was a Dr John show like in 1968?
A Jones (Mrs), Lewes
People liked it, they never saw shows like that with Colinda dancing nude, with body paint on. They never saw things like Chicken Man biting the heads off chickens and drinking their blood. He'd flip [*the chicken*] to a snake that they couldn't see, and the snake would eat it. It was a large black snake, so the crowd couldn't see it, and – woosh – the chicken disappeared. We also had magicians – I would come out of a puff of smoke. We threw glitter – and all kinds of roots and herbs to people and that meant something to them. Nobody else was doing that kind of stuff.

You knew Jimi Hendrix. What was he like?
K Raistrick, Doncaster
I liked him. I first knew Jimi when he was playing in Little Richard's band. Jimi was real special to the guitar like John Coltrane was on the saxophone. Certain people will take an instrument further, and will open the door for people to go through and go different directions. He wasn't an easy person to know – I got to know him more because girls that sang back-up for me made vests and clothes for him. When he was loose, he got looser. I worried about him because one day we were playing a gig in Quebec, and the promoter had run off with all the money. Jimi came offstage, and his ears and his nose was bleeding. He'd been kneeling in front of his amplifier – it's not a good sign. I told him something about it – but I don't even know if he could hear me.

chopping meat at the time and that thought was in my head – I can't let anything happen to my friend.

How were you introduced "Gris-gris"? *CM Rodger, Glasgow*
When I first got affiliated to Deacon Frank Lastie in the Spiritual Church of New Orleans. His wife, who was a Reverend Mother, she opened that up to me, and kept opening it up until she died. On her deathbed, she told me about things that wouldn't happen until 10 years later. The point to me was, she gave me so much else: I had a back problem from being on Methadone, and she passed a hatchet, wrapped in curry leaves over my back, and she healed me. I was around people with a whole other way of looking at things and it affects how I look at things today.

What's all the stuff on your stick? You've got your artist pass from *The Last Waltz*... What else?
Dan Auerbach, The Black Keys
Well, I have things that come from all over the world and... a little gris-gris bag here, some bones here, some Masai feathers. This is from Hindi people. This is an alligator tooth from Louisiana. My Uncle extracted this one. I have all of my NA [*Narcotics Anonymous*] things. This is from Thailand... I have some friend's ashes, more bones. This is from Nepal. This is from native people in the US. They're all spiritual things. I like to keep the spirit near me always. It goes through a machine at customs. I had to take some things out after an experience with customs officers. That's OK – you have to learn.

Which of all the tracks you played on at that time is your favourite late '50s/early 1960s session?
Randy Newman
Professor Longhair's "Mardi Gras In New Orleans". Of all those sessions, that sticks in my mind, because Professor Longhair untuned the drum set before recording "Hey Now Baby" and "Mardi Gras In New Orleans". And John Boudreaux left the drums how he untuned them, and it made the records sound very... Mardi Gras. It felt great for that song – it made it sound like there was a parade band coming down the street. It was a very spontaneous way of making

You used to play the guitar, but you now play the piano. How come?
Mike Mills, REM
Well, I got shot in this finger. And it's bent. I can still play guitar, I just don't play it as much. I'm a feeling person and I can play anything with feeling – but I forget that this finger don't work, so I hit a string with it and it just goes "bonk". How come? A guy was pistol-whipping the singer with my band. Ronnie Barron was his name: his mother told me if anything happened to her son, she would chop my cojones off with a butcher knife. She was

***Dr John**'s album, Locked Down, is available now from Nonesuch. Dr John will be playing at Under The Bridge in London on July 18 and 19*

UNCUT.CO.UK
Log on to see who's in the hot-seat next month and to post your questions!

SAM EMERSON/LFI; DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS; ROBB BRADLEY; JOSHUA BLACK WILKINS

The Beach Boys

THAT'S WHY GOD MADE THE RADIO

**"Fifty years ago, we started something very big,
now we're celebrating together in a very big way" Brian Wilson**

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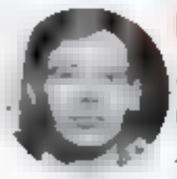
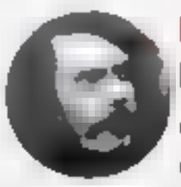
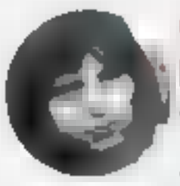


Bill Bruford Joined Genesis, then formed Bruford's Earthworks. Partnered Wetton in UK; rejoined Crimson in 1981.

Robert Fripp Collaborations with Eno, Bowie and more. Reformed Crimson periodically from 1981. Currently in Slow Music improv project, The Humans; overseeing Crimson remasters.



Michael Giles Released *McDonald And Giles* in 1971. Session musician in the 1970s; co-founded 21st Century Schizoid Band with ex-Crimson alumni 2002. Currently in Michael Giles' MAD Band.



Greg Lake Formed ELP in 1970. Replaced John Wetton in Asia in the '80s. Reunited with ELP 2010. Now in Greg Lake Band.

Ian McDonald Played on T.Rex's "Get It On". Founded Foreigner in 1976.

Jamie Muir Quit music business. Rumoured to live quietly in Scotland.

Pete Sinfield Produced first Roxy Music LP. Released solo LP *Still* (1973) and wrote lyrics for ELP. Penned hits for Bucks Fizz, Celine Dion, Cliff Richard etc.

John Wetton Played with Roxy Music and Uriah Heep; formed UK in 1978 with Bruford. Began prog supergroup Asia in 1981.

ROBERT ELLIS/REPFOTO

Story: Rob Young

The court of the Crimson Kings

KING CRIMSON had "quite an original approach to rock," understates Greg Lake. They certainly did: As the '60s ended, Crimson's fiery creativity gave birth to a bright and extravagant series of albums and — inadvertently — to a whole new genre: prog rock. Surprising, desperate — and shocking... Even Jimi Hendrix was taken aback!

"THERE WAS SOMETHING completely other surrounding this group," Robert Fripp has said of King Crimson's early years. "I don't believe we went from failure to international success in nine months without help from somewhere."

Indeed, King Crimson's status as a British rock institution has lasted a great deal longer than nine months. Although hard to keep in focus – they've undergone shifting lineups, stylistic switchbacks and periodic rests – Crimson has been reactivated throughout the 1980s, 'fractalised' into several discrete 'ProjeKcts' in 1997, while one incarnation was active as late as 2009. Although Fripp remarked online in December 2010 that the King Crimson switch is currently set to 'off', there's a sense that the power has never definitively been disconnected.

King Crimson was formed in November 1968, out of a previous group Fripp had with two friends from his Dorset schooldays, the brothers Michael and Peter Giles. Formed in the Bournemouth area in summer 1967, the trio caught the same wave of Pythonesque, tea shoppe psych as the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. Their album *The Cheerful Insanity Of Giles, Giles & Fripp* – also featuring the vocals of ex-Fairport Convention singer Judy Dyble and former Army bandsman Ian McDonald on woodwinds and saxophone, had not sold well, and their label Deram was growing impatient.

"The band was a strange outfit, I must say," recalls Greg Lake, who had shared a guitar teacher with Fripp back in Dorset and was then in a group called The Gods. "Kind of a comedy group. But the label weren't happy about this, because they weren't selling any records, so they said to Robert, 'If you want to stay on the label you're going to have to become commercially relevant. Get a lead singer and start to make records that people could play.' So Robert called me up and said, 'Would you consider joining us?' I knew Robert, he was a great player, and we got on well as great friends, and I knew Mike Giles, because he was from the same area. They were all classy players.

"Robert said, 'Oh, just one thing: it would be good to keep the band down to a four-piece. Do you think you could play bass?' I said, 'No problem' – I didn't think about it. Four strings instead of six – how hard can that be? Of course, I very quickly learned the bass is nothing like guitar, and it's an art form all of its own. And that came as a bit of a shock to me. I had to swot up on bass playing, which I did very rapidly."

> *"King Crimson was a chemistry... with added power – it was like a brain, a living brain"*
>
> GREG LAKE

King Crimson in 1969: (l-r) Robert Fripp, Ian McDonald, Michael Giles and Greg Lake

The classic 1969 lineup: (l-r) McDonald, Michael Giles, lyricist Pete Sinfield, Lake and Fripp

AT THE TIME, Fripp and the Giles brothers were living in a flat on Brondesbury Road in northwest London. Ian McDonald introduced a friend, Pete Sinfield, a young starry-eyed poet who had spent a good portion of the early '60s bumming around the North African hippy trail and had tried to start a band of his own, without success. Sinfield became the invisible fifth member, who ended up writing the lyrics, assisting with production, driving the tour van, and generally conceptually steering these four tempestuous personalities towards achieving a sonic and conceptual whole: to "diplomatically support the best idea in the room", as he puts it.

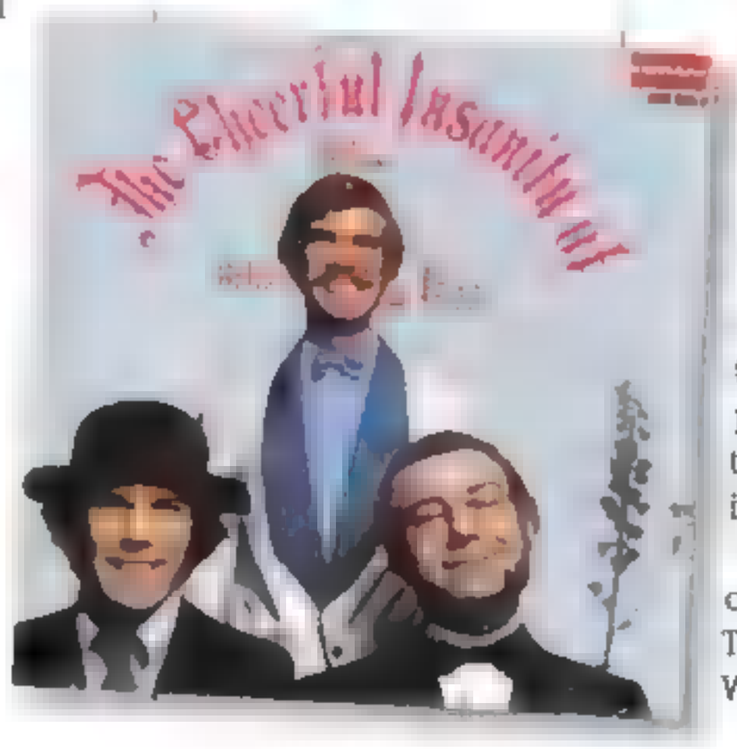
"I was the one who wrote all the poems and had the strange bohemian background," he says. "Robert came from a staid solicitor's family in Dorset. He kept his paperback books in plastic bags, and mine were scattered all over the place. But for two and a half years, the combination worked.

"When Greg was asked to join, it was still stuck in Giles, Giles & Fripp land, all very clever-clever. Ian and I introduced an element of songwriting – something of weight, flamboyant Gothic weight. Greg's talent and enthusiasm is like a big pair of bellows. There's this small spark and he'll puff away and suddenly he's made it into a flame and added some harmonies to it. Mike would put some drums behind it, I'll stick a word or two on it, and Fripp would calmly say, 'I have an idea for that', and drag something out of his 20,000 years of guitar practice."

In January 1969, the as yet unnamed group installed themselves in a rehearsal space in Fulham Palace Road, and set about writing the material that would become their first album. "When we started playing it was immediately apparent there was something special," recalls Lake, who became the group's vocalist. Sinfield says: "Before, they couldn't sing very well, but Greg had a beautiful tenor voice, which inspired me to give it some words for him to sing." It was Sinfield who suggested the name, based on the character from his lyric "In The Court Of The Crimson King". "It wasn't Beelzebub," he insists, "it was just sort of the dark forces of the world." Like other band names of the time – Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath – it also just had a memorable timbre. "You get all this lovely alliteration, and you make up the character afterwards."

"Fripp would calmly drag something out of his 20,000 years of guitar practice"

PETE SINFIELD



THE GROUP DYNAMICS were unconventional and potentially unstable – Fripp, the notional leader (or at least the constant), only played guitar, with vocalist Lake, and later John Wetton, inevitably perceived as the 'frontmen'. But this eccentric constitution was integral to the group's peculiar energies. "It very quickly became apparent," affirms Lake, "that the band was so unusual, with all these components making up this chemical. It was a chemistry: five individual people, fine musicianship, with quite an original approach to rock. The style that we really developed was what people call progressive music, but I don't think really we were the first, because *Sgt Pepper* to me was a progressive record. But in any case, that was how we began, and it was apparent that the effect King Crimson would have would be to shock the audience. People would be shocked. I remember seeing Jimi Hendrix one night at the Revolution club, and he was taken aback! It's when everybody's listening that one fires another, and it escalates. You can be talking about milliseconds of feel-and-response time. You have to be good enough to do that, and the players in King Crimson were all good enough to do that. And that was the added power that the band had – it was like a brain, a living brain."

Sinfield adds, "It was 25 years of experience all crammed in, and ideas and frustrations all coming out. That is bound to generate a bit of heat and excitement. Without friction you don't get heat!"

For his part, Fripp has outlined the chief ingredients in Crimson's formula: "Musical skill, commitment, desperation, surprise, Barry Godber's album cover, the time of the world, technology, the Ford Transit van, a patron in Angus Hunking [*Ian McDonald's uncle, who loaned them the money to buy a vehicle, PA and Mellotron*], management and record company, the unstoppable growth of the record industry between 1968 and 1978, the widespread social acceptance of drug use. But above all, it was the presence of the Good Fairy."

The first two albums, *In The Court Of The Crimson King* and *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, feel more akin to the prevailing folk-rock and romantic pastoral psych of the moment, than the blazing progressive chow-downs of their later years (early sets included Donovan's "Get Thy Bearings" and The Beatles' "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds"). McDonald's Mellotron, reeds and vibes add lush, organic texture, while Michael Giles' drumming fills the galleon's sails with epic, propulsive motion. Yet while the musicianship is stellar, from the long improvised coda to "Moonchild" to the Renaissance-fair ambience of "Cadence And Cascade", you could sense a feral energy coiled inside. Witness "21st Century Schizoid Man", the opening track on ...*Crimson King*, which started with Sabbath-like gouging chords and boiled over into a frantic, toe-curling improvisation. It was this track, filled with Sinfield's paranoid lyrics ("something that gathered all the madness of the world", as he puts it), that resonated so well with Barry Godber's unforgettable sleeve painting of a screaming, gurning face. At the Fillmore West on December 15, 1969, the last night of their US tour, they dedicated the song to Spiro Agnew.

That night proved fateful. Giles and McDonald, fearful of flying and sick of the tour grind, announced they wanted out. Lake, meanwhile, had a meeting in the hotel bar that changed his career, and altered the course of British progressive rock. "On the same bill that night was a group called The Nice, and I met

Sinfield and Fripp recording in 1969. Below: Giles and McDonald

Keith Emerson in the hotel after the show. He said, 'How's Crimson doing?' I said, 'Just breaking up.' He said, 'Well, I'm just finishing with The Nice – maybe we could form a band together?' And that was that." The seeds of Emerson, Lake & Palmer – and thus a whole new era of progressive rock – were sown that night.

GETTY IMAGES

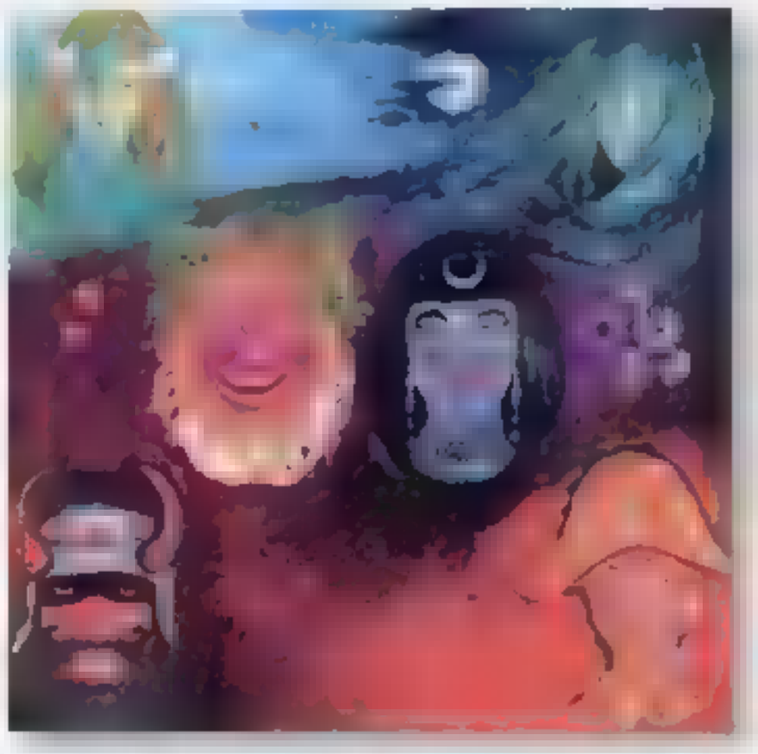
LAKE BRIEFLY RETURNED in March 1970 to provide the vocals on Crimson's *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, whose sleeve painting by Tammo de Jongh was patterned with floating heads, based on the theories of personality archetypes of American psychiatrist Richard Gardner. Sinfield: "I had been interested in esoteric ideas, and mystery, magic and circuses; it was in my family. I had a grandfather who was a member of the Golden Dawn... We had a German housekeeper who was a member of [*trapeze artists*] The Flying Wallendas. My mother used to take me to the Magic Circle. All

The art of Crimson

➤ In The Court Of The Crimson King

Artwork by Barry Godber

Greg Lake: "Barry walked into the studio with this album cover wrapped up in brown paper. Everybody was just silent. We were looking at the face of "Schizoid Man". It was eerie. There was no discussion – that was the album cover. It was absolutely stunning. Game, set and match. A short while later, Barry dropped dead of a heart attack."



➤ In The Wake Of Poseidon

Artwork by Tammo de Jongh

Pete Sinfield: "This is entirely based on Jungian masks. The archetypes are 12 faces, and you are two opposites: there is a face and the one behind the back of you. I liked the idea, so I threw it into a song..."

➤ Lizard

Artwork by Gini Barris

Pete Sinfield: "Gini was very young. She heard the albums and I trusted her work. It was the first thing she did. Water, air, earth and fire was the philosophy behind it. It has that Book Of Kells illustrated manuscript thing."

this was going on around me, and I read esoteric books, sci-fi..."

Poseidon was also seasoned with free jazz fragments, courtesy of pianist Keith Tippett and saxophonist Mel Collins, who continued as part of the lineup that produced *Lizard* (1970) and *Islands* (1971). This incarnation, with Ian Wallace on drums and Boz Burrell on bass and vocals, developed into an undisciplined sprawl which, coupled with Sinfield's mellow landscapes, sat at odds with Fripp's increasingly craggy sound. "Formentera Lady", the opening track on *Islands*, marked the tipping point. "Robert works in a very strict, concrete, disciplined way," explains Sinfield, "Boz and Mel were not the most disciplined of people... neither was I. I'd been to Spain, and was rather full of Mediterranean fields, warmth, dusty roads, sunsets... and wanted a softer, Ahmad Jamal/Miles Davis-y feel to the music, while Robert wanted to do [*harder music*]. I wanted something more relaxing. In that situation you start becoming disrespectful to your partner. And this was what happened. I started cutting him off, and he quite rightly got tired of that, to the point where he said, 'One of us has got to go, and I'm not leaving.'" Having dismissed Sinfield, in spring 1972 Fripp folded away the group and sought out an entirely new cast of characters for Crimson's next phase.

YES' DRUMMER AT that time, Bill Bruford, was an unashamed Crimson fan and had followed the band's progress "like a sick groupie". When Fripp invited him to join the new lineup, tempting him with gifts of books about magic and hermetic philosophy, he bailed out of Yes like a shot. "I was aware [*Crimson*] had had a revolution and the blood was on the carpet and stuff, but I just read the list: percussion player Jamie Muir, who was kind of an avant gardist; John Wetton from Family who was the go-to bass player at the time; and [*violinist*] David Cross, who I didn't know at all, and I said sign me up!" Wetton was yet another Bournemouth-born alumnus of Fripp's school; pairing Bruford with Muir was an inspired choice: the latter emerged from London's Free Improv scene alongside Derek Bailey and Evan Parker. His impressive arsenal of percussive devices, played with wild abandon, fitted perfectly into a group which was now including purely instrumental experimentation into their setlists. "He'd come from the art world," Bruford affirms, "and the world of new improvising, free atonal guys, and I was the new kid off the block with the fastest

Mission control: Fripp, Command Studios, June 1972

ROBERT ELLIS/REPFOTO

THE CIRKUS THAT NEVER ENDS

Your guide to King Crimson on record

In The Court Of The Crimson King
1969
From the misty Mellotron of "Epitaph" via the Gormenghasty etching of "Moonchild" and rugged rockery of "21st Century Schizoid Man", it's a confident, expansive and sumptuous debut.
9/10

In The Wake Of Poseidon
1970
Cut from similar cloth but patched with Keith Tippett and Mel Collins' free jazz, *...Poseidon* inhabits parallel worlds of myth ("In The Wake Of...") and the garish present day ("Cat Food").
8/10

Epitaph
1997
4CD boxset of 1969 live tapes and radio sessions. Includes Fillmore West 'farewell' gigs from November 1969.
8/10

Lizard
1970
"Cirkus" kicks off a cavalcade of carnivalesque images and portentous tone-painting. Yes' Jon Anderson trips amid Fripp's backwards guitar flourishes on the title track.
7/10

Islands
1971
Rosy as a Mediterranean sunset and executed with a light, jazzy touch, this transitional work saw Pete Sinfield bowing out with the romantic "Formentera Lady" and "Sailor's Tale".
6/10

Larks' Tongues In Aspic
1973
Percussionists Muir and Bruford run amok in this improviser's playground, as "Larks' Tongues... Part 2" descends into outright war.
8/10

Starless And Bible Black
1974
"The Great Deceiver"'s cosmic jiggery heralds one of Crimson's most wired albums. Check Fripp's searing solo on "The Night Watch".
7/10

Red
1974
The slimmed-down trio make a puggish onslaught whose impact is felt on anyone from Jane's Addiction and Red Hot Chili Peppers to Radiohead. A tantalising signpost to roads never taken.
8/10

Live on French TV, March 22, 1974: (l-r) Cross, Wetton, Bruford and Fripp

Flying V: (l-r) Boz, Sinfield, Wallace, Fripp and Collins

Below: the 1981 lineup – (l-r) Adrian Belew, Tony Levin, Bruford and Fripp

SHE'S BREAKING UP

How Crimson imploded in 1974

Bill Bruford: "We were at Olympic Studios in Barnes, and Robert [*Fripp*] decided in his wisdom that he wasn't going to express any opinion. John [Wetton]'s opinion was as good as my opinion. This was spectacularly unhelpful. Trying to make a record like that was ridiculous. We wanted him to be the boss; he didn't want to be."

John Wetton: "I got a telephone call to the effect that Robert wanted to take a sabbatical. I said, 'How long will that be?' And the answer was maybe a year, maybe longer. I said, 'OK, do what you gotta do', put the phone down and said, 'Oh fuck!' It's frustrating when you find a niche, work very hard at something, it's going in the right direction, and suddenly it all stopped."

paradiddle in Kent. Muir wasted no time at all in pointing out to me – and this was my first great and only drum lesson really – that the music doesn't exist to serve me; that I exist to serve the music. I'd been showing off until then." The first recording from this ensemble was *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*, a record described by another Ian MacDonald – Assistant Editor of *NME* – as "a challenging record, but its rewards are very substantial, even if you'd have to be an odd mixture of a person to like it all without reservation."

That was because it was an odd mixture of a band – pitched somewhere between epic rock, total freedom and the kind of funky electric fusion perpetrated at the time by Miles Davis, Mahavishnu Orchestra and Herbie Hancock.

"'Larks' Tongues' was Jamie's phrase," reveals Bruford, "for a diamond in a bit of roughage – apparently it's an oriental delicacy. It implied something lovely in a whole bunch of nothing much. Which was this fragile melody in the middle of the aural roughage. *Starless And Bible Black* [1974] is a phrase, of course, by Dylan Thomas, that I appropriated, probably illegally – as it just seemed to be absolutely the sound that the group was making, or trying to make."

The group, though, remained volatile. "One of those groups that if it was still there at breakfast the next morning you considered yourself lucky," as Bruford puts it. Muir absented himself out just before the release of *Larks' Tongues...*: "He went off to a monastery or something. Suddenly I was in control of all the percussion and I adopted half of Jamie's stuff – gongs, thundersheets, metal plates..."

Wetton confidently took over the vocalist's role, and introduced an old buddy, Richard Palmer-James, as the group's new lyricist. "On *Larks' Tongues...* they were all done to order, the three lyrics," Wetton explains. "I sent him over a cassette – he lived in Munich by then – with the tune jotted down on piano, and voice, and back would come the lyric, absolutely finished, watertight, and printed out."

> *"It was a band with muscle, sensitivity, different colours. I wanted it to go on forever. But it didn't!"*
>
> JOHN WETTON

THIS GROUP SHARPENED their razor-edge riffage across *Starless And Bible Black* and *Red* (recorded as a trio after Cross bowed out), both worlds away from the woolly outpourings of prog peers like ELP, Genesis and Yes. "For me that entire period smells of a Holiday Inn," complains Bruford. "The thing became so aggressive, I think, because of endless US tours: here you are in the back of a shed. I know David Cross wasn't happy with it, and me and Wetton turned into the 'flying brick wall', which you had to either duck or play with. And I kind of regret that. It took me a long time to learn to be just a whisker more subtle on the drum kit." "We were doing endless tours of America," adds Wetton, "and when you're on in front of Ten Years After or Iron Butterfly, you have to hit 'em hard, and show them you've got some kind of muscle. In a 15,000-seat arena, there's no room for pussyfooting."

Wetton's phrase is a reminder that Fripp's sights were also pointed in different directions: his ongoing experimental collaboration with Brian Eno had begun two years earlier with *No Pussyfooting*, and he had produced Matching Mole and jazz outfits Centipede and Ovary Lodge. Under the influence of mystical thinkers like Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, Fripp began to abandon control of the group, with terminal results. *Red*, released at the close of 1974, was the last Crimson release until 1981's wholly different *Discipline*. It was certainly the end of the line of evolutionary development that had begun in 1969. "This was a band with muscle, sensitivity, different colours," mourns Wetton. "I wanted it to go on forever. But it didn't!"

"You grope along in the dark," adds Bruford, "with a candle and a bit of string, hoping to find your way along a dark corridor – that's a bit like how it felt." ⓤ

40th anniversary CD/DVD-A editions of King Crimson's studio albums from ***In The Court Of The Crimson King*** *to* ***Red*** *are available from Panegyric, with the exception of* ***Larks' Tongues In Aspic*** *– to be reissued later this year*

REDFERNS; MIKE LAYE

On the road – to international fame: (*l–r*) Zac, Brittany, Steve, Heath, in Boston, April 15, 2012

Story: Andy Gill
Photos: Pieter M Van Hattem

Earthshaking!

The South has risen again! How ALABAMA SHAKES became the best — and the biggest — new band of 2012. "They make me think of when I was with Steve Cropper, Al Jackson, Duck Dunn and Otis Redding," says Booker T. "I haven't seen that type of group coming together for a lot of years."

IT'S AROUND 10.15 at the Paradise Rock Club in Boston, Massachusetts, a welcoming little club out in the university district, where America's hottest new band, Alabama Shakes, are just warming into their headline set.

They're about five songs in, a fiery slice of fatback funk-rock called "Always Alright", with Brittany Howard whipping up a storm, scrubbing chords from her SG with a churning rhythmic momentum that puts me in mind of the legendary Sister Rosetta Tharpe, her head thrown back in ecstatic abandon as the band charges for the finish. And then, something strange occurs. The song ends, and the crowd just goes totally apeshit crackers, with a volcanic outpouring of wild applause and cheering that goes way beyond mere appreciation to some deeper, more demented zone of fervour. And it just doesn't stop, but keeps rolling over and over, preventing the band from starting the next song, the crowd determined to establish the depth of its approval. Brittany smiles at her bandmates, bemused. "What the fuck just happened?" she asks.

What just happened was a critical mass being reached, one of those moments when it's clear a band has grasped the zeitgeist so firmly that it can sweep even the most disinterested of punters into a hysterical froth. It's something I've only recently witnessed at Arcade Fire shows, and it took them a few albums to reach that position. At this exact point in their set, I realised that Alabama Shakes were going to sweep immediately to that level. But hey, I don't need to tell you – you're probably one of the thousands who hoisted their debut album *Boys & Girls* into the Top 3 of the UK charts, first week out, after they'd played just three tiny gigs in this country, in a cramped room over a pub in Tufnell Park. Who saw this coming?

Not the band, that's for sure. "We've all been trying to figure out what kind of status we have," says bassist Zac Cockrell. "It kinda changes. They told us the other day, before the record came out, they were predicting a certain number on the Billboard chart. The Billboard chart? Any chart!" Bearded and sporting a baggy cap, Cockrell has the laidback, grizzled demeanour of Lowell George, and the insouciant attitude to match. "Then they tell you how few sales it takes to get on the chart," he continues with a smile. "I thought it would take about two million records to get on the charts! But, you know, things like that are popping up. I think I was in denial for a while that things were happening fast, but things have taken off now."

It speaks volumes for their level-headedness that when they had to bite the bullet and give up their day-jobs to pursue their musical dreams, they were scared at losing the security of a regular paycheck, from jobs as unglamorous as postal worker (Brittany), veterinary technician (Zac) and nuclear plant protection worker (drummer Steve Johnson). Even now, they're taking success with a sardonic grain of salt. When I marvel at how their UK mid-week sales placed them at No 1 for a while, guitarist Heath Fogg curbs any enthusiasm. "That was for two or three days, then it dropped to three," he acknowledges. "It's all downhill from here! We peak early!"

WE'RE BACKSTAGE IN the Shakes' dressing-room, hanging out over a few beers and reflecting on the group's sudden rise to international fame, from their backwoods origins in tiny Athens, Alabama.

"All kinds of people live in the county," says Brittany. "You got, like, country boys, who wear boots and have dip in their lip and drive a truck with a shotgun in back of it to school. Then there's also, like, normal people!"

This part of the South is classic Nascar country, the local entertainments epitomising those that dominate in the US away from the coastal cultural hegemony. When I ask what there is to do in Athens, they mention the rodeo, the fiddler's convention, four-wheeling (off-roading) and fishing.

"Kids there seem to like to hang out in parking lots a lot," says Steve. "They all tailgate there at Wal-Mart

GUY EPPEL

HUMOUR FAN

"At a time when everybody's saying that rock'n'roll is dying, Alabama Shakes are very much a rock band, and it's happening so fast for them because it's so good and so real. Although a lot's been written lately about how everyone's gotten fragmented off into their little cliques and groups, I think there's still a longing for a shared experience in our culture – it just takes something that presses the right emotional buttons of the heart and soul, and I think they could be that thing."

Patterson Hood, Drive-By Truckers

or a grocery store, or drive up and down roads, back and forth. It's like a mega-sized truckstop between Nashville and Birmingham."

"You can go inner-tubing," enthuses Brittany. This, it turns out, is the local casual watersport, involving being towed across a lake on an inner-tube. Sounds like fun. "Basically, you get in the creek and you're on a raft, kind of, tied behind a boat," she explains. "It's actually really nice. Or you can just go floating."

"It's not a boring place to grow up, but there's not a lot of activity happening downtown to hang out for," says Zac. "Most of the time was spent hangin' out in parking lots, arguing about what you're gonna do, and never actually doing it, then going home!"

It's the kind of community, then, where you makes your own amusements, rather than chase prevailing metropolitan fashions in leisure, entertainment and clothes – something which works to the advantage of a band like the Shakes, who grew out of the relaxed after-school songwriting sessions of Brittany and Zac.

"I knew Zac played bass, but I didn't really talk to him 'til we had class together," says Brittany, with the efficient familiarity of one who's having to tell the same story a lot of times these days. "We started talking about music, I told him I had some songs, and he checked 'em out, and came over and put some bass parts on them. After that we just started making ideas together and showing each other different kinds of music, just playing together. After a couple of years we met Steve at our local musical instrument store, the only one in town. He asked if he could come and jam with us one day, and it was really cool; and with Steve around, we could actually perform the songs."

At Steve's urging, the trio recorded a demo in nearby Decatur, which the drummer then played to guitarist Heath Fogg at the wedding of a mutual friend. This led to an invitation to support Heath's band at an upcoming show, though they needed help realising their ambitious arrangements.

"We were playing songs that required, like, horn parts, soul numbers and stuff like that, so we needed help, because at the time there was just me on guitar," says Brittany. "Heath started coming over my house and he would practise with us, and it kinda became that we were writing songs together. And as soon as we started writing together we knew we weren't going to stop."

Muscular Southern rocks (l-r) Steve, Brittany, Zac, Heath

"As soon as we started writing we knew we weren't going to stop"

BRITTANY HOWARD

First, they needed a name, and initially settled on The Shakes – a good name, certainly. So good that about 200 other bands got there first, necessitating the Alabama prefix. The copyright for 'The Shake' and its plural is owned by some guy that makes milkshakes, explains Brittany. "It's like a muscle shake, for bodybuilders." For myself, I'm just slightly disappointed that Alabama Shakes isn't a nifty pun on The Mississippi Sheiks, the '30s minstrel group who gave the world the blues classic "Sitting On Top Of The World", an apt sentiment for the Shakes' current position.

Initially, their own few original songs were bulked out with the cover versions that many a great band grew up playing, drawn in their case from a surprisingly broad musical spectrum. "We'd be listening to a song and say, that'd be pretty cool to cover," says Brittany. "It could be anything, because between the four of us, we like a lot of different stuff. It could be a Black Sabbath song, or an Otis Redding or Sam & Dave song – if it was cool, we'd play it. We didn't have, like, a niche or anything."

"There was common ground, for sure," adds Heath, "but everybody was bringing in different ideas."

"Zac knows a lot about '60s R'n'B, loads about bass players from then," expands Brittany. "He's taught me a lot of stuff I'd never heard of. But honestly, if I could name one kind of music that I love, fully and completely, I would say, Chuck Berry's guitar playing. It's like the same song over and over again, but it's always different, tells different stories, And you can always do this..."

She throws a little dance move, despite being seated.

"That to me is just so perfect – when I go out drinking, that's what I want to do, I just wanna do this! And '60s R'n'B and straight up-and-down simple rock'n'roll just go great together. Heath gets the '60s R'n'B, and he definitely gets the rock'n'roll, and then he has some other things he understands, like some country stuff that I never heard of. Like honestly, I didn't listen to Hank Williams 'til I met Heath. There's a lot of stuff we share between each other. And Steve – Steve is a machine! I knew when I saw him play 'The Crunge' that he could probably play anything. But we're not all about the past – we're always teaching each other about new music. It's all connected, anyway."

ALABAMA SHAKES

Your guide to the Athens whippersnappers' back catalogue...

The band's first release from last September, a four-track blast on which the irresistible, slinky "Hold On" is supported by three smouldering Southern soul slow-burners in the form of "I Found You", "On Your Way" and "You Ain't Alone".

8/10

The first single release on Jack White's all-analogue, vinyl-only live imprint, this captures the band in full Memphis/Muscle Shoals mode at Third Man's Blue Room, tearing up another standout cut from their debut album. Good luck in finding a copy!

8/10

Surely 2012's most dazzling debut album, stuffed with great, swampy soul grooves, fronted by the most arresting new voice you'll hear this year, and the kind of natural songwriting that seems to contain the entire history of Southern music within its staves.

10/10

PIETER M VAN HATTEM

Shakin' all over at the Paradise [illegible] Club in Boston, April 15: above, the group's touring keyboard player Ben Tanner; below, drummer Steve Johnson, and guitarist Heath Fogg, rip it up on stage

THERE'S GONNA BE A BOSTON ARMS BREAKOUT

Inside the Shakes' very intimate debut UK gig

Alabama Shakes' first UK show at the Boston Arms, Tufnell Park (Wednesday, February 22, 2012) will probably go down as their generation's equivalent of the Sex Pistols at the 100 Club: the minuscule gig that everyone claims to have attended. One who did attend was Russell Crowe, the latest in an ever-lengthening line of celebrity fans that includes Adele, Bon Iver, Jack White, Jamie Oliver, Alex Turner, Robert Plant and David Byrne. When the *NME* asked what he thought, Crowe responded in typically brusque manner: "Did I like the band? Her voice! Imagine you're in that band, with her singing. They're fucking great. That's all I'm saying." Thanks for dropping by, Russ. The show elicited a tidal wave of critical approbation, and fanciful comparisons: Amy Winehouse fronting Kings Of Leon, Mavis Staples backed by the Stones, The White Stripes fronted by Cee Lo Green, Led Zeppelin fronted by Beth Ditto. The Shakes' reputation was instantly cemented.

IN TONIGHT'S SHOW, the main remnant of those early days spent learning cover versions comes with the final encore, a blazing take on Led Zeppelin's "How Many More Times" which moves smoothly from Zac's loping bass intro through the various twists and turns and dynamic shifts of the Zep arrangement, then, just as Brittany's doing the final line "'*Cos I got you in the sights of my...*", her microphone comes unplugged and the band are forced to draw out the moment, paddling furiously against the current until she gets it plugged back in and bawls out "*...guuunnn!*", and they can sail on over the waterfall into the closing riff. It's a clear demonstration of how well they've come to know themselves and their material, and how much trust they can place in each other.

"I've never seen a band grow, exponentially, so fast," marvels Patterson Hood of Drive-By Truckers, who first saw Alabama Shakes at an in-store appearance last July at a little record store in Florence, Alabama, and was smitten. "They just ripped it, it was fantastic! I fell in love with them [illegible] that moment."

PIETER M VAN HATTEM; REX FEATURES

Hood invited the band to support the Truckers on a series of dates through the autumn. "They opened several shows a few weeks apart, and the difference each time was amazing," he recalls. "One show in early November, I watched waves of people connecting with them over the course of their set. It was Springsteenian – they had people away in the back and up on the balcony, yelling for a band they had never heard in their life. Nobody in that audience had any idea who they were watching, but they had everybody in that place just yelling, and singing along with songs they'd never heard before!"

Through Patterson, the band acquired proper management and booking agents, and their career picked up speed at an alarming rate. By then, over the course of a year they had already recorded the bulk of an album's worth of new material on their own, having trawled the internet to find a little one-man analogue studio in Nashville, called The Bomb Shelter.

"We were all working, so we'd save up some money and literally go in for like, a day or two, track maybe four or five songs, come back and save up some more money," explains Zac. "In the process of doing it that way, our songs morphed a lot, as we continued practising."

"We don't improvise a lot onstage," says Heath, "but when we're in the studio we'll explore and experiment, and it's just fun when something comes together, bam! – there it is, the part of the song we didn't even know we were looking for."

"When you're in a studio and you capture that moment, you can hear it happening," agrees Brittany, "and every time you listen to that recording, it'll make you smile, you can re-live it over and over."

"We did that for four or five sessions," says Zac, "then for the last session we'd been signed by then, so they paid for the studio, most of

Where did you get *that* voice?

The influences behind the Shakes' vocal powerhouse

PIETER M VAN HATTEM; REX FEATURES

Brittany Howard's distinctive vocals stand in stark opposition to today's identikit divas, but then, as she says, "I learned how to sing in my bedroom, that's all there was to it." And she has unusual taste in singers, compared to the wannabe Beyoncés and Mariahs. "I really love Bon Scott!" she reveals. "Not that I'm trying to sound like him or nothin'. It's just that when he sings, it's so much fun to watch him. I love it when you can look at a singer and tell they're just giving themselves away to what's going on. The same can be said about Otis Redding – like, when he sings he does this little dance, and he's really tall and funny-lookin', and it's awesome! And I went and saw Sharon Jones for the first time, and she knocked me off my head, she changed my world. Phew!"

Scenes of devotion at the Paradise Rock Club, Boston

which was for mixing. We'd basically tracked the whole record on our own time. I don't know if it's the best way to do it, but it worked pretty good for this record."

The company that signed the band was the ever-ready Rough Trade, whose Geoff Travis and Jeannette Lee had first been alerted to Alabama Shakes through reading about them in a *Guardian* music column. Having tracked down and fallen in love with what they could find of the band online, they flew out to watch them at one of the Truckers' gigs in Savannah, Georgia.

"They were playing in a beautiful old Art Deco seated theatre," recalls Geoff Travis. "As soon as they started playing and singing we knew that we were witnessing something special, and we wanted to sign them on the spot. It was amazing to see the response they got: I don't think we had ever seen a seated audience, watching a support group that they had never heard of, give the group a standing ovation as the set ended."

A few months later, and Rough Trade's latest coup paid off immediately as *Boys & Girls* rose, with no visible means of support, into the upper reaches of the charts, confirmation of what Travis describes as their desire to "bring joy and maximum excitement to people's lives".

ANOTHER CONFIRMED FAN is soul legend Booker T, who played a few songs with the band at shows in Washington and Hollywood, and spent a few days last October working with them in a Nashville studio.

"We just hung out, writing songs and jamming," says Booker. "We had a great time and got lots of new material, some good songs. The band is great, really organic, and I think I met them when they were just beginning to get their roots settled down. It was a good time to get together."

"I was too in awe of him to concentrate, really!" admits Zac. "It was a really cool thing, but who knows what will be done with that stuff? It was more of a 'get together and hang out' kind of thing, to my eyes."

"We just sat in a circle, picked'n'grinned!" says Heath.

"It was kinda like a think-tank, comin' up with ideas and stuff," says Brittany. "I think we came up with some pretty cool stuff, but what he wants to do with it is up to him."

"Brittany can depend on the guys – it reminds me of the way we supported Otis..."

BOOKER T

For Booker, the experience triggered resonances with his own career. "It makes me think of when I was with Steve Cropper, Al Jackson, Duck Dunn and Otis Redding," he says. "The way that Heath and Steve and Zac support Brittany, it reminds me of the way we supported Otis – she can depend on them, and it's a natural, unspoken thing that happens, and it's just great to be around. It doesn't happen that often, and the public is not stupid – they hear about those things, and it just spreads. I haven't seen that type of group coming together for a lot of years."

And like everyone who hears her, Booker was smitten with Brittany's high-voltage delivery. "She's honest, and she's been through so many changes for such a young girl – once again, she reminds me of Otis in that respect. She's so honest, she doesn't hide anything, she's a great kid. And I love Brittany's guitar, I'd love to get her on my album. She's very basic, and one thing I like about it is, she's not afraid to not play; but when she does play, the band sounds really, really full. Their keyboard player is really good, too."

Not the least of their assets is their songwriting, which, while eschewing the more complex, literate strategies favoured by some writers, has a welcoming immediacy, of a kind that makes you think you've heard a song somewhere before, when you're only halfway through first hearing it.

"They have melodic hooks that stick in your head," agrees Patterson Hood, "and there's some combination of vulnerability and strength in Brittany's voice, and when it combines with the songs, it's kind of Aretha-esque. It's so moving. And they're just babies! So far, they've been really level-headed, and even tried to slow this thing down; because they've got to be a little bit terrified at the pace of it. It's been amazing to watch from close proximity, because I've never seen anything like it in my life, and I've been doing this for 27 years."

***Boys & Girls** is out now on Rough Trade; a single, "Hang Loose", is released on July 23. The band play festivals throughout July, August and September*

THE ZAC COCKRELL SCHOOL OF BASS ETIQUETTE

Soul legends, dirt and oiling the strings with pizza...

Shakes bassist Zac Cockrell is a devoted fan of old-school Southern soul bass players like Fame Studios' Tommy Cogbill, and Duck Dunn from the MG's, along with studio staples Gordon Edwards, Rick Danko and, of course, Motown legend James Jamerson (above). And he echoes Jamerson's belief that the funk resides in dirt and old strings. "I like just the standard Precision bass and Ampeg set-up, and yes, mine's quite funky," he says, something confirmed by keyboard player Ben Tanner, who claims it's literally been in the garbage, thrown offstage a few times. "There's something about bass strings," says Zac, "they really do sound better the older they get. I love eatin' a big ol' nasty slice of pizza, pickin' it up and playin', just gettin' it all over it!"

Zac Cockrell: get on your knees and play

PIETER M VAN HATTEM; GETTY IMAGES

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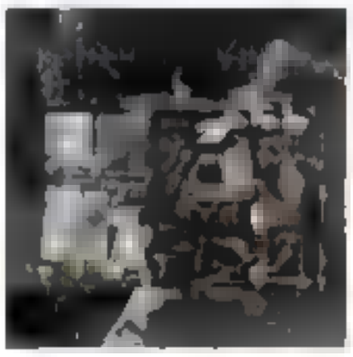
Bob Mould

"I wanted to change the world..." The Hüsker Dü and Sugar man revisits his most influential group and solo albums

FOR BOB MOULD, it's always been emotional. A writer of angst-filled but unfailingly tuneful songs, his work with hardcore punk pioneers Hüsker Dü (a huge influence on Nirvana and grunge generally) was an artistic highpoint in his 30-year-plus career. Since that band's demise in 1987, there have been intermittently great solo records, and another band, Sugar – whose albums are reissued this month. In spite of all the catharsis in his work, Bob is himself blessed with a good sense of humour and humility. Of his influence on the likes of Nirvana, he is modest. "I had a suspicion where things were headed," he says humbly from his San Francisco home, "and I was part of that collective..."



BOB MOULD
WORKBOOK
VIRGIN, 1989

Tasteful black and white portrait on the back. Nicely played, folky and melodic rock on the record within. This is the post-Hüsker Dü Bob Mould, at 27, a Mature Artist.

I spent eight years in Hüsker Dü, which was a great, raucous group. I realised quickly that trying to emulate that sound would have been pointless. The things that I had been writing in 1987 for what would have been the next Hüsker Dü record were a little quieter and a little more sophisticated. I remember bringing "Compositions For The Young And Old" in to the other guys in Hüsker Dü and getting a lukewarm-to-no response.

That entire year of 1988 I was essentially by myself up on a farm in Northern Minnesota, with nothing but music to work on. Going from the hullabaloo of being in Minneapolis with this band that toured the world, now I'm plopped down in the middle of this farm town where I didn't know anybody.

The first three months were pretty aimless; experimenting with different sounds. Then I started to hit upon this voice with the music. Celtic tunings with the guitar. The quiet, rural setting had a lot to do with the lyrics. Once I got the first few pieces of music, like "Heartbreak A Stranger", it really started to make sense. I don't know if it was intentionally mature, but it was definitely more pastoral. It was the first time people could hear the words and feel the emotional weight of the songwriting.

SUGAR
COPPER BLUE
CREATION, 1992

Mould absorbs the acclaim of younger peers citing him as an influence and reconvenes another powerful trio. The result? A brash and shiny modern rock record.

All the touring round *Workbook* with Anton Fier and Tony Maimone meant the music got physical again, so [*follow-up*] *Black Sheets Of Rain* became a loud record. But I was losing a lot of money on the road with a band. So around 1991 I was doing a lot of solo acoustic and electric shows, trying out a lot of new ideas. People were responding to certain songs. I'd go home and do a lot of recording of those. So at the beginning of 1992 I called up Malcolm Travis, the drummer, and David Barbe, the bass player, and said, let's get together and make this record. At the time it was meant to be the third solo record. It didn't really become a band until a few weeks into the rehearsal for what would be the recording sessions. The three of us were getting on really well and we got a call from the booker at the 40 Watt Club in Athens, Georgia, which is where we'd been rehearsing and she offered us a gig, saying, this band cancelled – "Do you want to play tomorrow night?" We were like... "Uh, OK." That day we came up with the name Sugar. That was where the formality of the name came from and it grew from there. David Barbe reminds me that I had said some of the songs would be like sugar and others like spice. I don't remember saying that, but if David says I did, I probably did.

SUGAR
BEASTER
CREATION, 1993

The same sessions that gave rise to *Copper Blue* also birthed the violent riffing of *Beaster* – its evil twin. The album finds kinship among the British noise rockers on the Creation label and peaks with the snarling, dirty riffing of "JC Auto".

Through 1991 when I was writing the darker material that became *Beaster*, it became obvious that it had a musical theme – the songs weren't quite as toppy as the other stuff for *Copper Blue*. I think by the time we finished rehearsals in February 1992, there was this suite of songs that was going to be separate from the pop stuff, but I didn't know how. There was eight reels of tapes, 26 songs. On the cover sheet songs were marked "A", "B" and "C". "A" songs were *Copper Blue*, "B" became *Beaster* and "C" became B-sides.

I met with Alan McGee in December 1991 when I was doing acoustic dates. He was very excited at the prospect of working together. I played him some of the demos I had. He thought they were genius and wanted to put them out right away – we drove back to London from Manchester, listening to [*My Bloody Valentine's second studio album*] *Loveless* as we drove down the motorway and it had a very profound effect on me. Alan emphasised for me what an inspiration Hüsker Dü was on what Creation had become. It felt totally comfortable; it reminded me of the peak times of SST. They had that real indie spirit.

INTERVIEW BY JOHN ROBINSON. PHOTOS: PAT POPE

Pretty as a picture: Sugar in 1994, featuring (l–r) David Barbe, Malcolm Travis, Bob Mould

HUSKER DU
LAND SPEED RECORD

NEW ALLIANCE, 1982

Hüsker Dü debut LP – live, with 17 songs in under 27 minutes, it's a record so fast only dogs can hear it. Contains many of the songs that would comprise the band's 1983 studio debut, *Everything Falls Apart*.

I moved to the Twin Cities when I was 17 to go to college. I went to see a band called The Suicide Commandos who were quite an influence, and jumped into punk rock. I met Grant [Hart], who worked in a record store, and we hit it off right away. He knew this fellow who had a bass guitar, Greg Norton, and the three of us got together. Within six weeks we had a gig at a punk club in Minneapolis – that was May of '79 and that was where things started.

Hüsker Dü went through a number of styles early on: very fast punk rock, very slow, dirgey, almost like Factory-Records-sounding. Then we arrived at this faster hardcore sound that was already brewing on the West Coast. Summer of '81 was the first time we really went on the road. We spent a couple of weeks in San Francisco, met Jello Biafra playing at their shows. We locked into that network. People had heard the band, so they were eager to help us out. So we did this enlightening summer tour, and we saw how crazy it was in SF. So we went home and recorded our homecoming show. *Land Speed Record* was the first of two sets that night. We cut it on four-track in scratchy mono. I remember taking the tapes down to a mastering house in Gary, Indiana that mastered Christian records. They didn't know what to make of that!

HUSKER DU
ZEN ARCADE

SST, 1984

Hardcore punk bands didn't make double albums. And that may well be the point, as Mould, Hart and Norton bust out of a generic straitjacket, while keeping their intensity intact. Still deranged, 29 years on.

We recorded it at the end of 1983 when we were getting quite a lot of critical acclaim. I was pretty driven and I'd become a very vocal supporter of my own work. I'd make big proclamations, and one of them was that we were going to make this record that was going to change everything. That we were going to outgrow hardcore and take it to a new place. Then we make this sprawling, epic double album which was unheard of for hardcore. That set us apart right away.

It was done in 40 hours or so. I barely remember recording it, because I was out of my head by then, on everything: drugs, alcohol, just... life. I was 23 and wanted to change the world. I told everybody I was going to do it. Taking all that energy into this very compact session and coming up with this sprawling work was actually no easy feat.

The psychedelic components to the record? There are a couple of explanations for that. At the recording there was a lot of LSD floating around on the periphery of the band. Also, I was a big fan of The Byrds – *Younger Than Yesterday* – and Grant was a big fan of bands like The Litter and HP Lovecraft, real pure garage-psych bands. We knew the genre well, and combining it with that atmosphere of drug use... those two things informed the style and nature of the record.

There's a loose narrative to it. When Grant and I started holding our songs up against each other, we started to see a narrative. We started assigning storylines to it. There was a character, a kid from a broken home, all he wanted to do was make video games, so he went to work at this company and got this girlfriend, and she committed suicide. It wasn't like someone sat down and said, "Here's this story, let's make this a record." It was more like, "Oh look, there's a story." That's my take on it. It was never meant to be a narrative like *Quadrophenia*.

I remember when the Minutemen heard we were making a double album, they wanted to do it, too. Maybe that's why it wasn't released until nine months after we finished it. People were like, "Holy shit, they said they were going to do this, and they did." Did it feel like an endorsement of my pronouncements? Yes it did.

Zen Arcadians: Hüsker Dü in 1984 – (l-r) Grant Hart, Greg Norton and Bob Mould

HUSKER DU
NEW DAY RISING
SST, 1985

There are better Hüsker Dü albums. But there are no fuzzier ones, as through a wall of white noise, Mould and Hart conjure some sprightly pop melodies to accompany their speed and aggression.

For me, *Zen Arcade* was a huge catharsis of that teen/young adult angst. Once that howl was out of my system I was able to get to the next place and I couldn't get to that next place fast enough. The second it was done I was moving to the next thing. "Celebrated Summer", "Perfect Example", "I Apologise" – the emotional content had changed enormously. Grant made a big jump as well in the catchiness of his songs. That record was

> *"For years the blame has fallen on Grant and his heroin problems, but that's not real fair..."*
>
> BOB MOULD

the last record we made with [*producer*] Spot: *Everything Falls Apart*; *Metal Circus*, *Zen Arcade*... they were all made on Spot's terms, and on SST's terms, out in Southern California. For *New Day Rising*, we said we're making this in Minneapolis and if Spot wants to work on it, he can come out here. I think that was a difficult thing for Spot to do, and sonically the results were less than stellar, but if one can get past the sound issues, the songwriting had really jumped to the next level. I was aware that everyone was watching, and maybe on some level that elevation was part of that – being a little more considered with arrangements and hummability.

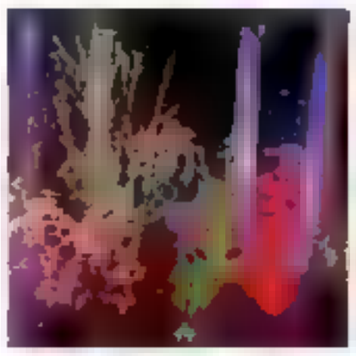
HUSKER DU
FLIP YOUR WIG
SST, 1985

The icing roses on the cover give fair warning of the confection within. A thoroughly entertaining collection of pop songs, Mould's "Make No Sense At All" is an apogee of his patented punk-psych hybrid.

Flip Your Wig is the one for me. That's the one that does it for me out of all of them. Grant and I were able to produce it ourselves without Spot, and we were working on this great batch of pop songs. To me it was the one that worked – it was the peak of the band in terms of getting along and having a vision. I think it was where Grant and I were totally on the same page – that to me is why I look back on it as a high point for the band recording. And the touring that went with it. We toured with Soul Asylum as the opening act and they were such a great band at the time.

Everything around you elevated you: the band was great, we were getting along, we had our friends on the road.

Everything was exactly how you would wish it to be. Like, if you were to imagine it, it would be, "We get to take our friends and make our own records", and we're all getting along. And I guess for me that's why I look back on it and think it's so great.



HUSKER DU
WAREHOUSE: SONGS AND STORIES
WARNERS, 1987

The end of the line – but we should all go out in such glory. Containing Mould's staggering "Ice Cold Ice" and "Visionary", this is the definitive recording of the band's abilities.

In the last year and a half of Hüsker Dü I was so sober – in hindsight it was a contributing factor to the demise of the band. That was a tough time. There was no formality as to whose songs would be on the records: more often than not I'd have the lion's share. After *Candy Apple Grey*, where two of Grant's songs were singles, I thought, 'Well, I'm not budging on my songs.'

The bigger story by that point was the dynamic of the group. Grant was less and less engaged. He and I were still working side-by-side but his life had taken a different turn; he was spending more time with a different pack of people in Minneapolis. I was becoming more of a home body. I wasn't at the time aware that the drug of choice had changed drastically. So we're on different wavelengths, no-one wants to budge on songs. And we had Warners breathing down our necks: get a new booking agent, get a real manager. We make this LP and the manager kills himself the night before the tour. For years the blame has fallen on Grant and his heroin problems, but that's not real fair. Truth is, for the last 12-18 months, it was going downhill rapidly. *Warehouse* may be a much better record, but *Flip Your Wig* is the document of much better times.

BOB MOULD
MODULATE
GRANARY MUSIC, 2002

Sing, if you're glad to be gay! Or better still, make a dance-influenced LP. Divisive, but customarily honest Mould stuff.

I'd been doing the same thing for 19 years: write songs on guitar, turn them up, get in a band, play them with other guys. Juxtaposed with that, I'm a 37-year-old out gay man living in New York City, who has never spent any time building a gay identity. Anyone can have gay sex. Not everyone has a gay identity. For me it was important to have that. I remember being on a plane in Brussels at the end of '98: all this weight was lifted from me and I could go and live this big gay life in NYC. And the soundtrack to this was dance music. It was "Believe" by Cher. It was Sasha, Digweed and Deep Dish. I'm going to the gay gym, I'm listening to disco. It's the soundtrack to my new life. I'm educating myself. I was thinking, 'I can do this', and that was where it came from. It was a whole new way of writing. It was similar to 1988 when I let go of Hüsker Dü and was in the rural environment that gave me *Workbook*. All the rules were different.

***Bob Mould** plays Copper Blue on June 1 at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire; Demon/Edsel are releasing expanded multi-disc CD/DVD editions of Sugar's complete studio recordings a week at a time from May 28*

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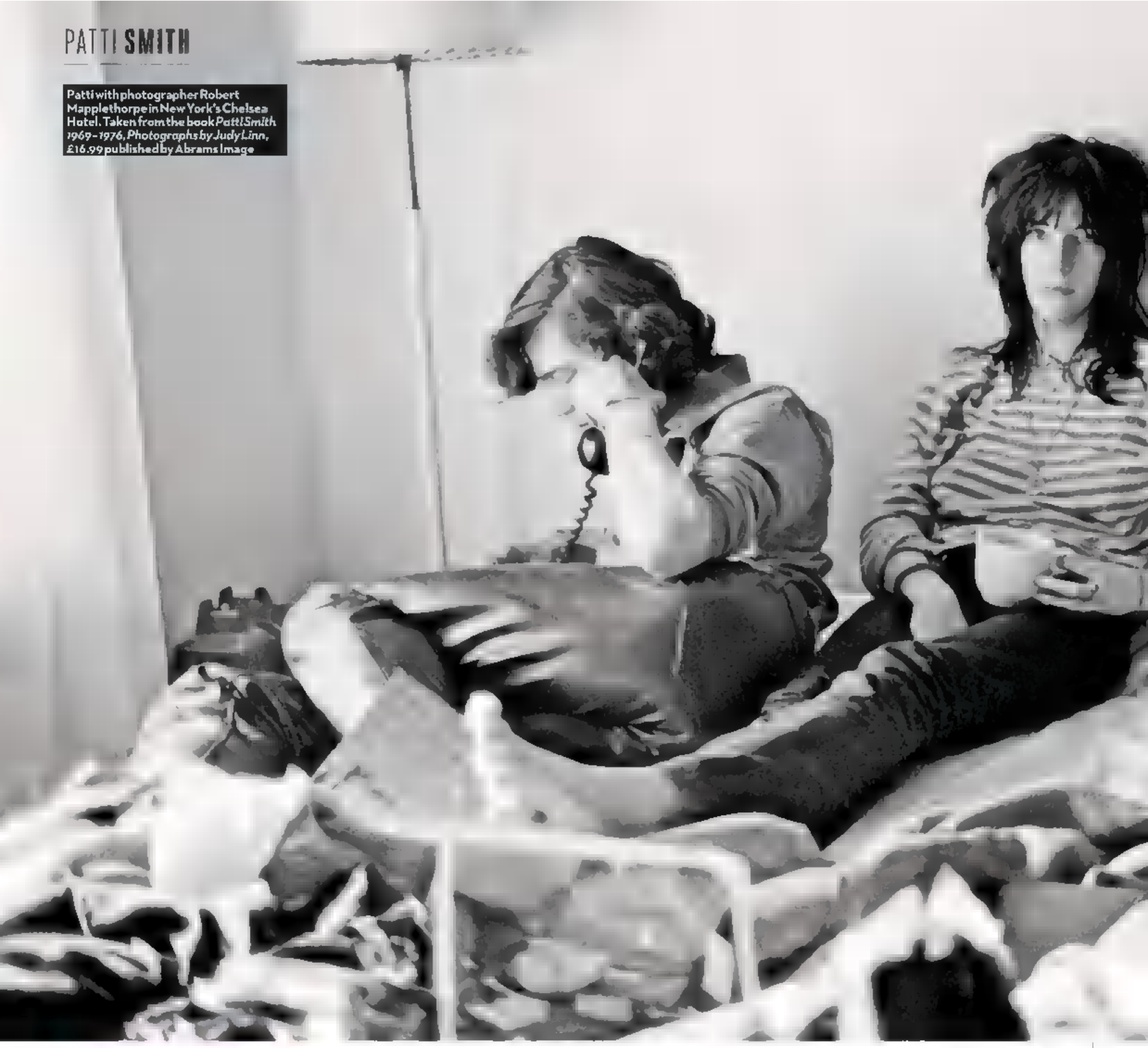
‘I wanted to understand *the full human experience*’

PATTI SMITH thought she would just make one record, then go back to working in a bookstore. As it turned out, she embarked on a 40-year quest that has been remarkable and unfettered even by the standards of rock’n’roll. In an unprecedently frank interview, Smith and her bandmates tell her whole story, from the Chelsea Hotel – via CBGB’s, streams of consciousness, spinal injury, love, retreat, loss and the good advice of Bob Dylan – to her fine new album, *Banga*. “What I’m afraid of … an ecological apocalypse. The death of the bumble bee … more important to me than homeland security.”

Story: David Cavanagh
Photo: Derek Hudson/Contour by Getty Images



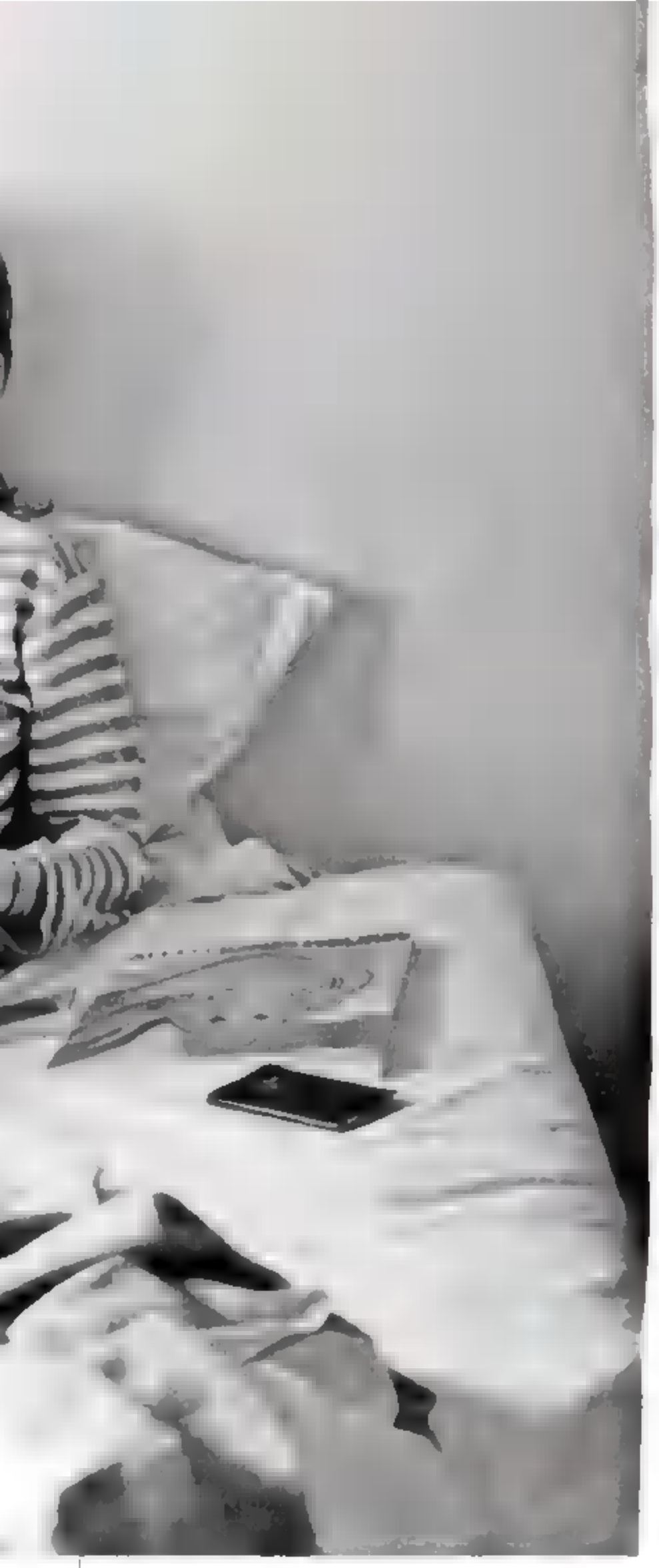
Patti with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe in New York's Chelsea Hotel. Taken from the book *Patti Smith 1969–1976, Photographs by Judy Linn*, £16.99 published by Abrams Image

THE SLOGAN IN the window of the lingerie shop across the road reads "Let desire bloom", but I feel desire of a different kind as I dart into the lobby of the Covent Garden Hotel. My Patti Smith interview is looming and I could murder a stiff gin and tonic. In an oak-panelled library upstairs, Smith's new album, *Banga*, is being played to international journalists. They slouch in armchairs, brows furrowed, making notes. A tray of fruit provides the room's only primary colours. It's *Banga* with mango.

Her publicist enters and explains the rules of my interview. No personal questions. Try not to ask about the past. Patti will discuss her work, insofar as it relates to *Banga*. OK? Good. And with that, 98 per cent of my questions lie in ruins. I'm about to meet a hypersensitive intellectual with zero tolerance of idiots and sycophants, and I'm worried that I may be both. "Listen, I still get intimidated by her," says Jay Dee Daugherty, her drummer since 1975, when we speak some days later. "She does have a reputation."

I'VE BEEN SENT for. She's having afternoon coffee in a suite along the corridor. "Hi," she says, in the same hesitant voice with which she greeted the Pope on the beach in her 1979 song "Wave". She motions me to sit down. It's quite disconcerting meeting her. She has a lazy eye that peers past your right ear. Her grey-streaked hair covers most of her face. "I'm told you've heard my new record. What didya think?" Grasping the nettle, I tell her my favourite song is "Constantine's Dream", a complex story of history and art, which builds and attacks and retreats and ends in a terrible warning: our planet is spinning towards an apocalypse. It's followed by a cover of Neil Young's "After The Gold Rush" ("*flying Mother Nature's silver seed...*"). Is humanity faced

JUDY LINN



with the frightening thought of relocating to a new home?

A fist shoots out and punches my thigh. "You have understood," she says. Maybe, she adds, we could do the interview tomorrow when she'll have more time? The Baudelairean poet sees through my crystal skull. We agree to meet for lunch.

BANGA IS ONLY Smith's ninth album of new songs since her now legendary, shockingly confident 1975 debut, *Horses*. She named it *Banga* after Pontius Pilate's dog in Bulgakov's *The Master And Margarita*, ■ legacy of a year spent immersing herself in Russian literature in 2008. It has songs about Amy Winehouse, the Tohoku earthquake, Johnny Depp and – in opening track "Amerigo" – arrogant New World colonisers who sailed with baptismal fonts on their ships in order to cleanse the natives, little realising rainfall did that already. It's Smith's way of establishing right away that Nature is boss. By *Banga*'s end, Nature will have her authority ripped from her.

"It's the thing I'm most afraid of," Smith explains. "I'm not afraid of terrorism. I'm not afraid of the bomb. What I'm afraid of is an ecological apocalypse, our punishment for destroying the earth. The death of the bumble bee is more important to me than homeland security."

Poetry and emotion

The Patti Smith discography

HORSES

(ARISTA, 1975)

10/10

Beginning with a revolutionary reinterpretation of R'n'B standard "Gloria", *Horses* reconstructs language and music to become an emotionally draining masterpiece.

RADIO ETHIOPIA

(ARISTA, 1976)

7/10

Weird voices, dark atmospheres, an unhinged 10-minute title track and the occasional diamond riff ("Ask The Angels"). Slammed by the critics who'd loved *Horses*.

EASTER

(ARISTA, 1978)

7/10

Commercial success... but *Easter* doesn't compromise. For every radio-friendly "Because The Night" there's a "Rock N Roll Nigger", Smith's snarling testimonial to those who live "*outside of society*". Banned in some record shops due to Smith's hairy armpit on the cover.

WAVE

(ARISTA, 1979)

7/10

Patchy, but three all-time classics: "Dancing Barefoot", "Frederick" (written for future husband Fred 'Sonic' Smith) and a ferocious cover of The Byrds' "So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star".

DREAM OF LIFE

(ARISTA, 1988)

7/10

Her comeback after a nine-year silence. Anthemic, huge-sounding and passionate. Includes "People Have The Power".

GONE AGAIN

(ARISTA, 1996)

9/10

A bereaved Patti sings elegies for her lost loved ones. So raw and personal that you feel like you're eavesdropping. Only she could make an album like this.

PEACE AND NOISE

(ARISTA, 1997)

7/10

Smith reached new generations of fans with albums like this – as melodic and modern-sounding as it was angry and topical.

GUNG HO

(ARISTA, 2000)

7/10

Her most accessible album ever? Certainly, "Glitter In Their Eyes" was almost indie-pop. But don't overlook the many anti-war messages. She still raged.

TRAMPIN'

(COLUMBIA, 2004)

7/10

Almost the template of her post-1995 work: some pretty tunes, some harder rock, a poem about a historical figure ("Gandhi") and a mammoth improvisation ("Radio Baghdad").

TWELVE

(COLUMBIA, 2007)

6/10

Covers album. A tribute to Smith's heroes, but some of her choices ("Gimme Shelter", "White Rabbit", "Are You Experienced?") are far too iconic to be tackled, even by her.

Patti giving it the [illegible] Richards, circa '71 – taken from the book *Patti Smith 1969–1976, Photographs by Judy Linn*, £16.99 published by Abrams Image

She's starting her soup when I arrive at the restaurant. She wears a dark jacket, blue jeans, white T-shirt and a small crucifix pendant. The menu is breathtaking: £36 for a steak. "Have whatever you like," she encourages. In *Just Kids*, her award-winning memoir of life with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, she writes of Mapplethorpe scolding her for having uncouth table manners. Today she orders lamb cutlets, which she cuts into tiny squares, wipes in their sauce and eats with her fingers.

If *Horses*, after 37 years, remains her designated masterpiece as a rock artist, *Just Kids* took Smith to unprecedented levels of validation in the literary world. She's since been working on at least one novel, as well as the poetry she writes every day. Lenny Kaye, her faithful guitarist, remarks: "The good thing about Patti is that she does art in every medium. There are books in the pipeline. Photographs, installations, special performances. Who knows where she'll go next?"

But she still believes in albums, those time-honoured collections of songs of diverse provenance, with a 10-minute epic near the end. "Constantine's Dream", like previous epics – "Birdland" (*Horses*), "Memento Mori" (*Peace And Noise*), "Radio Baghdad" (*Trampin'*) – was entirely improvised. Smith entered the vocal booth with not a word on paper. Her narrative spans nine centuries and has an intricate timeline involving a saint (Francis of Assisi), a Renaissance painter (Piero della Francesca) and an explorer (Christopher Columbus), but Smith never stumbles. "Improvising is what she does," shrugs Kaye. That doesn't make it any less impressive.

At New York's ultra-bohemian Chelsea Hotel, where Smith lived with Mapplethorpe in 1969–70, she was friendly with three great Beat luminaries: Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and William Burroughs. It was Burroughs who urged her to read Peter Reich's *A Book Of Dreams* (1973) – which inspired "Birdland" – and it was Burroughs who told her that she was a shaman. There was definitely some evidence for it. Her live performances were renowned for their feverish whirling dances, their electrifying atmosphere and their tendency to go beyond improvisation into possessed babbling. Reviewing one concert, the *New York Times*' John Rockwell expressed concern that Smith might someday veer over the edge into insanity.

Burroughs told her not to question shamanism, but to use it without fear. I ask her if it was like going into a trance. She says no, it was more about inexplicable clarity. "It's like if you and I were talking and all of a sudden your skull was crystal and I could see your actual brain. But we'd still be talking. I might not even say anything to you. Or I might say, 'I can see all the movements of your brain.' It's... casual." She smears a piece of cutlet in its jus and brings it to her mouth. "I'm a casual kind of person."

THE UNIVERSE OF Patti Smith is an intoxicating, rapturous and at times overwhelmingly intense place to be. Like the French poets whom she studied precociously in her teens – Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Verlaine – she writes in an ecstatic language full of wondrous visions and sensuous metaphors, as if unable to stop herself from describing all the beauty, tragedy, violence and passion that she's observed in the world and in her imagination. The fact that she found her primary form of expression in rock'n'roll was, she says, never intended. But rock'n'roll would not have been the same without her. To Lenny Kaye, she's "incomparable", a giant of the 20th Century, an artist who "does exactly what art is meant to: elevate the soul".

She's been criticised – for pretentiousness, usually, since she makes no bones about poetry being a higher calling. There was a time, post-*Horses*, when she couldn't do anything right. When she had a surprise hit single ("Because The Night", 1978), she was accused of selling out. A year later, she was so angered by Julie Burchill review that she read it aloud onstage at Wembley Arena.

"People just bitched," she remembers. "They had it in their minds that I was becoming this big rock star. Or they said I was supposed be punk rock – and now I have a popular single so I can't be punk rock. Eat shit! It was a love song to my boyfriend! Don't confine me. Don't confine me in your small idea of what I'm supposed to be doing."

"Patti works on an intuitive level," comments Jay Dee Daugherty. "She's always bristled at the word 'career'. She never plotted to achieve stardom or cultivate an image. She hasn't had a manager since 1977, which gives you an idea of how much she cares about a career. She's an artist and a worker. If anything, she's anti-career."

Smith stresses again that she had no ambition to be a singer when she arrived in New York in the late '60s. "If you saw me then, I was just a skinny kid from South Jersey, a really rural area. I was smart and well-read, but I was not sophisticated. I was awkward. I wanted to be an artist. But then this strange feeling came over me... what's that word... presentiment... when I saw Jim Morrison onstage. This

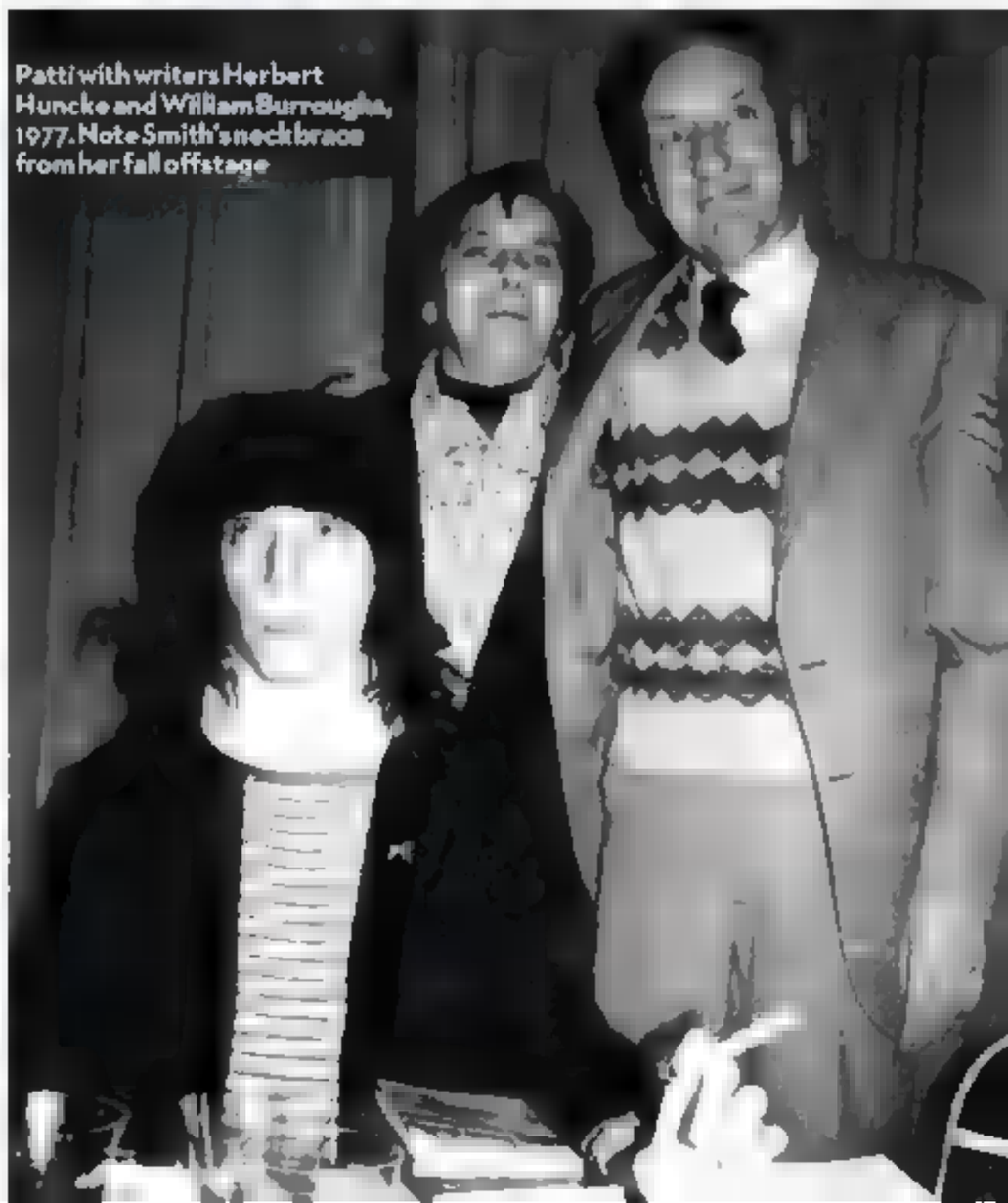
BANGA'S EPIC

"I WAS DREAMING OF THE END OF THE WORLD..."

The key song on *Banga* is the epic "Constantine's Dream". Ever wondered how Patti prepares for those improvisations? A year of research, apparently...

➤ **"I first started the idea for 'Constantine's Dream' in Arezzo, Italy, when we were finishing an Italian tour. I had a terrible nightmare. I was dreaming of the end of the world. Saint Francis was in the dream, weeping blood.**

It was so disturbing that I went down into the square – I needed air – and the church was open. And there was an effigy of Saint Francis and a painting: *Constantine's Dream* by Piero della Francesca (above). I thought, 'Wow... I'm channelling this church!' I spent a year studying, going to see the sites of Saint Francis' life and all of Piero della Francesca's paintings. I found the correlation that Piero della Francesca died in the same year [1492] that Columbus reached America. By now I'm starting to map the poem out in my head. I study a lot of history to be able to improvise."



Patti with writers Herbert Huncke and William Burroughs, 1977. Note Smith's neck brace from her fall offstage

JUDY LINN; JOE STEVENS; CORBIS

Street life: (l-r) Lenny Kaye, Richard Sohl, Patti Smith, Ivan Kral and Jay Dee Daugherty, in May 1976 in Copenhagen, Denmark

happened to me three times in my life before I started performing. One was hearing The Byrds' 'So You Want To Be A Rock'N'Roll Star'. One was seeing The Doors. And the other was seeing The Grateful Dead at the Fillmore East."

The 1970 Dead concert, which she attended with her friend Bob Neuwirth, was notable for a curious event. Smith, possibly overcome by pot smoke in the auditorium, attempted to clamber onstage and improvise poetry to the music. Had it not been for the quick reactions of a Hell's Angel, Patti Smith would have debuted as a live performer singing "Dark Star" with the Dead.

IVAN KRAL ESCAPED Czechoslovakia in 1968 just before the Soviets seized control of Prague and closed the border. His family began a new life in New York where Ivan, a musician, found himself playing in an early lineup of Blondie before joining Patti Smith's band in 1974 as bassist and second guitarist. Smith and Debbie Harry, nominally part of the same CBGB's sphere, could not have been more different in aspect or intent. Harry was blonde, photogenic, kittenishly desirable. Smith, with her self-scissored haircut and dangerous intelligence, was provocative and challenging in almost everything she sang and wrote. She didn't have attitude. She *was* attitude.

"She was the most original person on the New York music scene," says Ivan Kral. "Most female singers were very feminine. Debbie, for instance, loved Motown and pretty songs. But Patti was totally about inspiration. She would start reading a poem, then toss it aside and go into a stream of consciousness. It was fascinating. It felt like this lady was invincible." Jay Dee Daugherty: "I saw her play, as a fan, in '74. Somebody had shown me a picture of her in *Rock Scene* magazine and I thought she looked like Keith Richards. I saw her play with a trio. It was innovative, heartfelt, unique, liberating and sexy as hell. I thought, 'This is the band I want to play with.'" By the time

THE DEBUT

"...THEN SHE ROBBED A BANK..."

Patti Smith's 1974 debut single was a radical reworking of "Hey Joe", which prefaced the famous lyrics with a spoken-word intro about kidnapped heiress (and convicted bank robber) Patty Hearst

Patty Hearst, caught on camera robbing the Hibernia Bank in San Francisco, April 15, 1974

➤ "The idea of kidnapping has always horrified me. My mother was a young girl when the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped [*and murdered in 1932*]. My mother never got over that. Every time we were late, she'd say, 'Where were you? You could have been kidnapped!' I wrote about Patty Hearst because at first she was missing, then she robbed a bank, then there were pictures of her with a machine gun, standing in front of [*her captors*] the Symbionese Liberation Army's flag. I just wrote the song as a response to all those things. I wasn't writing my own songs yet, so I was using other people's songs as a vehicle. The reason we did 'Land Of A Thousand Dances' and 'Gloria' on *Horses* was because I liked repetitious, three-chord rock songs but I didn't understand that I could write my own. I didn't realise that you could use those chords a million times."

JURGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS; KEYSTONE/CONSOLIDATED NEWS PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

AIN'T IT STRANGE

WHO WAS WILHELM REICH?

The 'cloudbusting' eccentric revealed...

➤ Smith's classic song "Birdland", on *Horses*, was inspired by a book about the psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Reich served with the Austro-Hungarian army in the First World War and studied with Freud in Vienna in the 1920s. Fleeing Nazi Germany in 1933 (he was portrayed by the pro-Hitler press as a decadent Jew), Reich enjoyed a career as an

analyst in Scandinavia before some of his more unusual methods, which involved touching his patients and instructing them in "orgasm therapy", began to cause serious concern. In 1939 Reich moved to America, where some believe he may have become mentally ill. His paranoia and obsession with orgasms and libido (not to mention his 'cloudbuster' machine, which he claimed could make rain fall) saw him increasingly isolated and investigated by the FBI. Following a federal order that all copies of his books should be burned, Reich was found guilty of contempt of court and sentenced to two years in prison. He died in Lewisburg Penitentiary in November 1957, a week before he was due to be released on parole.

BOB GRUEN; CHUCK PULIN.COM; CORBIS

Saddle up: Patti and her band record *Horses* at New York's Electric Ladystudio

Daugherty joined, the Patti Smith Group had taken four years to assemble.

If Smith's life-changing coalition of rock and the written word had begun anywhere, it was at St Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery on the night of February 10, 1971. Impatient to get noticed and loathing the restrictions of Beat poetry and the genteel reading circuit ("those wretched teas"), she invited a guitarist, Lenny Kaye, to play electric guitar while she recited. Their audience was spectacular: Andy Warhol, Lou Reed, numerous poets and every major rock critic in the city. The performance was an iconoclastic mixture of poetry, feedback (in a church!) and the highly agitated onstage manner that made Smith so watchable.

"In hindsight," says Kaye, "it was a very significant occasion. But at the time it was only meant to be a one-off performance. What we were doing was so unusual that it was hard to know how it could be turned into a regular event." Two years elapsed before Smith and Kaye tried it again. But, as Kaye puts it, "the clockwork of our lives was already turning". As they began adding other musicians – pianist Richard Sohl in 1973, then Kral – Smith was already thinking of music in terms of a cascade: as "a continuous flowing bed" on top of which she could "spew endlessly". Smith and her group became a must-see sensation. Kaye remembers gigs consisting of "pop songs... 'Mack The Knife'... and a field of sonic noise you could ride a car through." Smith: "I got too much attention. People were offering me record contracts at the end of an 18-minute poetry reading. It was a lot of money. I didn't think I deserved it." Kaye: "If there was a tradition we were placing ourselves within, it was the free jazz/poetry tradition in the East Village."

It was ironic, then, that Smith would become synonymous with punk. Even now, her name is historically linked with the likes of the Ramones and The Dead Boys, when all they have in common is a CBGB's stage. Smith, a loyal Stones and Dylan fan, didn't even endorse the basic punk doctrine that the old guard should be overthrown. "I loved the old guard! I just didn't like the new guard. I worried that rock'n'roll was winding down and our cultural voice was in danger of being lost. One of the things that induced me to start recording was to be the kid with his finger in the dyke. I was waiting for the new saviours to come along."

You didn't think you'd be the new saviour?

"No! Never. I felt my role was to hold the fort until the troops arrived. I thought I'd probably make one record and go back to working in a bookstore." She laughs. "You know... I was just waiting for The Clash."

> *"I wrote Horses for Michael Stipe. I wrote Horses for Morrissey. And they found it"*
>
> PATTI SMITH

"EVERYTHING HAS ITS time and place," observes Jay Dee Daugherty. "New York City in 1975 was the place to be. Maybe in 1976 or '77 it was London – the ICA or the 100 Club. And whatever it is today – let's say Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It all comes together through circumstances, fate and karma. And it may never come together that way again."

It was time. Having conquered CBGB's, put out an independent single ("Hey Joe"/"Piss Factory") and signed to Clive Davis' Arista label, Smith was ready to make *Horses*.

"*Horses* was all in Patti's mind," Ivan Kral declares, "even before we got to the studio. All the emotions, all the poetry, was already in her." The recording of *Horses* was exciting, "mystical" (Kral), chaotic, frustrating and saw more than one screaming match between Smith and producer John Cale as the ex-Velvet Underground man tried to marshal the inexperienced band into a routine. What made it difficult for Cale was that the two most ambitious – and longest – pieces on *Horses* were improvisations and, as such, utterly volatile. "Birdland" was a vivid dream in which the psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich hovered over a New England farm in a spaceship. "Land" was more metaphorical. Who was Johnny? What happened in the hallway? Was he raped? Stabbed? Or was it the transfer of some sacred and arcane energy from the boy's body into Johnny's?

"It's a while since I've listened to it," Smith responds when I ask for a précis, "but Johnny... he's the pre-punk rock kid. He's like a William Burroughs wild boy. He's entering the world, ready to take it on. It's a metaphor for the birth of rock'n'roll. It ends with the death of Jimi Hendrix. When it says, '*In the sheets... there was a man*,' that's Jimi in Notting Hill, dying in bed."

Do the limbo: Smith on stage in 1976

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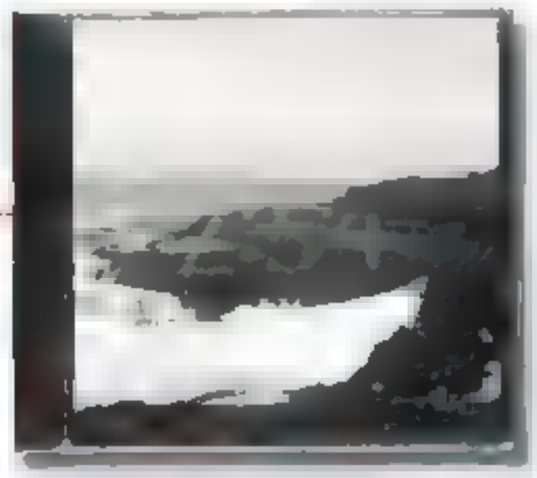

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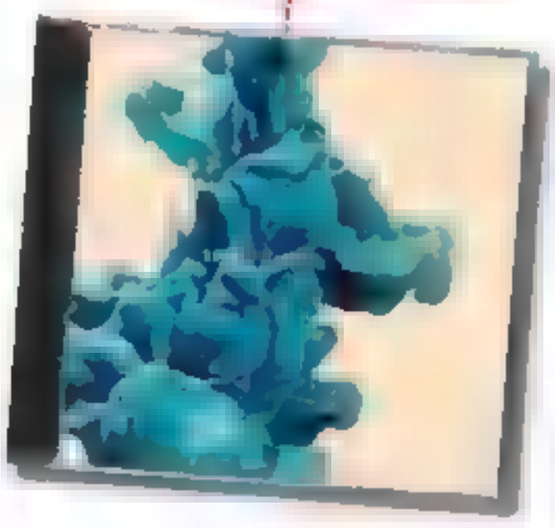

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Smith with fellow Jersey legend Bruce Springsteen, right, and producer Jimmy Iovine, in 1978

When Johnny cuts his vocal cords, are you talking about rock'n'roll self-destructing?

"I don't know!" she laughs. "No, I think it was more... opening them up. There's a constant metamorphosis. He opens up his vocal cords – that might be myself, actually, finding my voice in rock'n'roll. He's got a penknife, a jackknife, a switchblade. When you think of *Blackboard Jungle* or juvenile delinquents, the image of the black leather jacket and switchblade is the rock'n'roll image for my generation."

Introducing itself with one of the most famous opening lines ever ("*Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine*"), *Horses* was instantly acclaimed. "It was a declaration of principles," states Lenny Kaye. Typically of Smith's ambiguous poetry, some interpretations could be perfectly understandable while being factually wide of the mark. Many listeners heard the first two songs ("Gloria" and "Redondo Beach") and presumed they were about lesbian relationships. "Gloria", in fact, was not about two women and "Redondo Beach" was not about two lovers.

"It never occurred to me," Smith says. "'Redondo Beach' was written for my sister after we'd had an argument. I didn't predict that [*interpretation*]. But I'm not analytical about it. When I'm singing, I shift gender very easily, I probably – although I can't really relive where I was when I was doing 'Gloria' – I probably was singing that song from a male point of view. But I was toying with it as well. I've always been heterosexual, but I don't have any qualms about shifting gender as an artist. Singers do that all the time. When Joan Baez sang 'Farewell Angelina', I didn't think she was a lesbian. I personally don't care what *anybody* is. I mean, we did have a high faction of homosexual people in our following, but I always felt that that was because our music addressed the disenfranchised. Whoever they might be. People who were weird. People who were nerds. People who stood out, for whatever reason."

Alienated teenagers, sensitive waifs, artistic misfits – they all discovered *Horses* at an impressionable age and held on to it for dear life. In time, Smith would start meeting some of them. They'd listened, absorbed and become performers themselves. Michael Stipe. Bono. Morrissey.

"Exactly," she beams. "They were my people. They were *exactly* the people I had in mind. I wrote *Horses* for Michael Stipe. I wrote *Horses* for Morrissey. And they found it."

JOE STEVENS

IN JANUARY 1977, the Patti Smith Group did something rare for them: they opened for another band on an American tour. Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band were more commercial and much more successful. Smith, by contrast, had been getting used to annoying setbacks: scathing reviews for her album *Radio Ethiopia* (her follow-up to *Horses*) and censorship of her single "Pissing In A River", which was bleeped by radio and sold in a sleeve that asterisked its title.

Radio Ethiopia is remarkable for the range of voices that Smith adopts – some of them extremely disturbing – from a little-girl whisper to the unstoppable forces of hell. I ask her why she experimented so much with her singing. "*Radio Ethiopia* was a period when I was exploring my voice – the sound of my voice – more than the words I was saying. The reason for that was because a strange thing happened to me. All the improvising that came so easily to me suddenly dissipated. I got sick of language. I was at a loss for words."

> *"I wanted to understand the full human experience. That meant motherhood"*
>
> PATTI SMITH

"Ain't It Strange", from *Radio Ethiopia*, was the most physically demanding song on tour ("and still is," she says). It was shamanism. It was babble and dervish dance. A wildly spinning Smith would end the dance by stamping her foot on her monitor and grabbing the microphone, a signal for the chorus to re-enter. But it was about to go horribly wrong. On January 23, 1977, the third date of the Seger tour – in Tampa, Florida – Smith complained to Seger that his crew weren't leaving her enough space onstage to perform properly. That night, she claims, they gave her even less. At the dramatic point in "Ain't It Strange", her foot reached for the monitor and she overbalanced, tumbling off the stage backwards into the Curtis-Hixon Hall's concrete orchestra pit. The band stopped playing. Smith didn't move. Jay Dee Daugherty thought she might be dead.

"I fractured my spine and my neck," she says. "I had 40 stitches and several fractures. There've been many

BOSS TUNE

HOW TO WRITE A HIT SINGLE...

With a little help from Bruce Springsteen

➤ "We had to make a record," Smith remembers. "We didn't have many songs because I'd been down [*ie hospitalised*] since my accident. I chose Jimmy Iovine as producer, who was engineering a Bruce album in the studio next door. Bruce had this song, but he couldn't get a handle on the lyrics. Bruce gave it to Jimmy. 'See if Patti likes this.' Jimmy gave me the tape and I didn't listen to it. I had the tape in a basket. One night Fred, who lived in Detroit and who I was really smitten with, was supposed to call me. We didn't have any money in those days, so we only talked on the phone once every 10 days, because long-distance calls were expensive. He was supposed to call at 7pm, and I was all excited. Eight o'clock, he hadn't called. Eight-thirty. If I was really cool, I would've said, 'Fuck you' and left. But I waited. I noticed the cassette in the basket, and I thought, 'I'll listen to that darn song.' I put it in the cassette-player and I thought, 'Hmm, it's in my key... the chorus is already written... all I gotta do is fill in the verses.' So I started writing them. That's why it says, '*Love is a ring... the telephone.*' By the time Fred called at 11, I'd written my only hit single."

"Because The Night" reached No 5 in Britain and No 13 in America.

PATTI **SMITH**

FRED SMITH

"HE WASN'T CALLED 'SONIC' FOR NOTHING..."

Our guide to the best of Patti Smith's guitar-shredding husband, Fred...

KICK OUT THE JAMS – MC5

(ELEKTRA, 1969)

Live album recorded in Detroit at full-on hysteria pitch. One inflammatory anthem after another. 19-year-old Fred (in the right channel), and co-guitarist Wayne Kramer are like a pair of attack dogs fighting over a carcass.

HIGH TIME – MC5

(ATLANTIC, 1971)

Besides his firecracker solos, Fred's songs dominate the '5's final studio album. "Sister Anne" and "Skunk (Sonicly Speaking)" are immense tracks in US guitar history.

SONIC'S RENDEZVOUS BAND – SONIC'S RENDEZVOUS BAND (EASY ACTION, 2006)

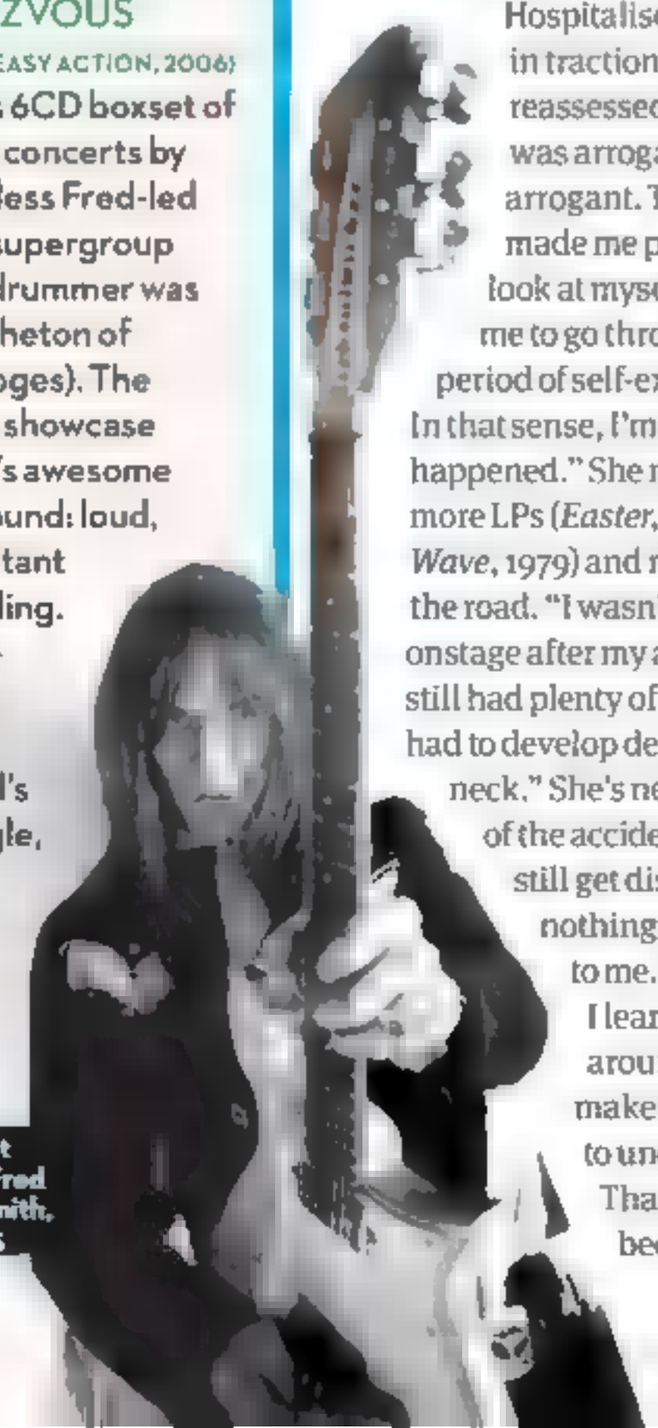
Glorious 6CD boxset of late '70s concerts by this luckless Fred-led Detroit supergroup (whose drummer was Scott Asheton of The Stooges). The ultimate showcase for Fred's awesome guitar sound: loud, unrepentant and thrilling. The box-set also includes the band's only single, "City Slang".

Smith with her songwriting hero Bob Dylan, outside the Bitter End, NYC, 1976

... rumours... 'Oh, she was stoned.' It wasn't like that. I was being careful on the stage because there wasn't as much room or light. I didn't whirl around as much as usual, but when I hit the monitor with my foot, it was half-hanging over the lip of the stage." Has she ever blamed Seger or his crew? "We needed more space and light, and we didn't get it, and I had an accident. Those are the practical aspects of it. It pissed me off, and it wasn't very friendly, but it's nothing I'm gonna sue anybody over."

Fred and Patti Smith, March 1990

Hospitalised, lying in traction, she reassessed her life. "I was arrogant, very arrogant. The accident made me pull back and look at myself. It forced me to go through a period of self-examination. In that sense, I'm not sorry it happened." She made two more LPs (*Easter*, 1978, and *Wave*, 1979) and returned to the road. "I wasn't as physical onstage after my accident. I still had plenty of energy, but I had to develop defence mechanisms to protect my neck." She's never completely shaken off the effects of the accident. "I still suffer from it. My neck... I still get discomfort, spinal discomfort. It's nothing I can't live with. But it was important to me. It was a sign that it was time to evolve. I learned that the universe did not revolve around myself. Being an artist doesn't make you better than anyone else. I wanted to understand the full human experience. That means motherhood. That means becoming a common citizen."



Picking out the Jams: Fred "Sonic" Smith, in the MC5

"Fred was fearless... he was good at everything"

PATTI SMITH

PATTI HAD BEEN introduced to Fred 'Sonic' Smith by Lenny Kaye in 1976. Fred Smith came with serious credentials. He'd been a guitarist in the MC5 – the generals of the Detroit rock revolution – playing his Mosrite like a machine gun. Oddly, because he'd started so young, Fred was three years Patti's junior. Kaye declared him America's greatest rock'n'roll guitarist. The only problem was that Patti knew nothing about the MC5. "I saw him across the room," she smiles, "and I had no idea who he was. I looked at him and he looked at me. And I just knew. I thought, 'This man is going to be in my life.'"

The two Smiths fell in love. Sonic's Rendezvous Band – Fred's explosive new group – opened for Patti in Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. But she didn't feel that was appropriate. "Being a support band is not the role for the man you love. I'd rather have supported him." She decided to move to Detroit (Fred's home city) – which raised eyebrows in her band – and in 1979, after they'd played a concert in an Italian football stadium, she made her final announcement. "That's it," Daugherty remembers her saying. "We're done." Only 18 months after "Because The Night" had given them a worldwide hit, the Patti Smith Group were finished. Ivan Kral was devastated: "I loved the band, I loved the friendship. I felt betrayed. I still have the songs that were destined for our next album. I thought it could have been our best work."

Smith's retirement from music was not announced to the press. Gradually, it became clear that it would be a long-term absence. Kral: "She completely disappeared. There was no communication from her again." There were a few

CHUCK PULIN.COM; ROBIN PLATZER/TIME & LIFE IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

PATTI SMITH

jibes that the most empowered female artist of her generation had abandoned her career to do her husband's ironing. The cynics had obviously never heard of Frida Kahlo. But if Kahlo is a convenient parallel to draw – the brilliant artist with spinal injuries who marries a fellow artist – a more persuasive analogy is Bob Dylan, Smith's songwriting hero, who recovered from his 1966 motorcycle crash by living a life of simplicity, normality and children.

Patti gave birth to a son (Jackson) in 1982 and a daughter (Jesse) in 1987. She describes her daily life in the family home: "I would spend the early morning writing, then spend the next hour taking care of the children, then scrub the floor and do the laundry, then go out and work in the garden."

Who was the breadwinner in the family?

"We didn't work like that. Whatever money each of us had, it went into our common till. In the '80s we spent some time developing other areas of expertise. Fred taught himself higher math and went to pilot school and became a private pilot. He also became an excellent golfer. He was a very powerful athlete when he was young. He boxed in school. He was scouted by the Detroit Tigers [*baseball team*] as a shortstop. Fred was good at everything. He could have been a stock car driver. He was fearless in everything he did."

Patti and Fred Smith collaborated on only one album, *Dream Of Life*, released amid much expectation in 1988. Jay Dee Daugherty was delighted to get the call to play drums on it. "Patti was pregnant with Jesse, so I knew we weren't going to be touring... I wasn't sure what the plan was." The album's big single and standout song was "People Have The Power", an air-punching anthem that sounded as if Fred and Patti were addressing the entire population of the world from their suburban Detroit domicile. "When we wrote 'People Have The Power', Fred's fantasy was that it would become a universal rallying song. A song that everybody would sing. He didn't say, 'Let's write this cool underground song that nobody will ever hear.' He wanted it to resonate and reverberate throughout the world."

Fred, however, cried when he read the reviews of the album. They were, Patti says in a low voice, "heartbreaking, vindictive... unnaturally cruel". Fred refused to consider any further recording. Six more years of silence followed.

TIM BOOTH, THE singer in James, heard from his friend Lenny Kaye that Patti Smith was about to perform again. The circumstances were deeply upsetting. Fred had died of a heart attack in November 1994 and Patti's younger brother Todd had suffered a fatal stroke a few weeks later. Patti and Lenny were going to do an acoustic gig in Detroit as a memorial.

"There were about 200 people," Booth recalls. "I sat in front of her for nearly four hours. She read poems and cried. She told stories. Lenny requested she read a poem for Todd. It was a very complicated poem. She started and gave up. She was going, 'Come on, Patti...', getting angry with herself. She came back to it, and suddenly her voice went into a place I've never known before. It was almost like her eyes glazed over. She got very fierce. The poem lasted about 12 minutes. At the end, she turned to Lenny and said, 'Next song!' They went into 'People Have The Power'. Every time she sang '*people have the power*', it felt like she was sending lightning up my spine. She turned to Lenny, 'Next song!' Then she did a Kurt Cobain cover that lasted 25 minutes. It was one of the most incredible things I've ever seen."

In 1995, 16 years after her departure from the touring circuit, Smith realised that she would have to recommence touring to feed her family. Her children, 13 and 8, were unaware their mother had ever commanded a stage, let alone been a key player in the history of rock. She was racked by doubts. "I'd lost not only my husband and my brother but my pianist Richard Sohl [*who died in 1990*]. I didn't think I could ever perform without Richard. And I was still grieving for Fred. I wasn't anxious to go out into the world." The knight who unexpectedly came to her rescue was Bob Dylan, who offered her a two-week tour of America's East Coast as his opening act. Uncertain whether people would even remember her, Smith put a band together that included Kaye, Daugherty and her old friend Tom Verlaine. Dylan, who'd attended his first Patti Smith gig in 1975, was more of a fan than she knew.

SMITH'S ELEGIES

"I'M PAYING MY RESPECTS TO THEIR WORK..."

Some fans may be surprised to find a song on *Banga* about Amy Winehouse. But Patti has been writing about tragically self-destructive stars for decades...

➤ **"My first published poem, when I was a young teenager, was called 'Bird Is Free' and it was about the death of Charlie Parker. I wrote it in 1960 or something. So the first poem I ever had published was an elegy. It seems to be something that I do."**

You've since written poems and songs about Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain and others. What makes you write about musicians who die young? Is it a way of paying your respects?

"I'm paying my respects to their work. I can't pay respects to their lifestyle. I don't romanticise self-destruction. I'm not interested in it, I'm not bent towards it and I don't find it attractive. Sometimes people think that because I write about certain people, I must be attracted to their lives. But it's their *work*. I wouldn't have written a song about Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison on *Horses* ("Land") had I not been so influenced and inspired by their work."

Getting in the (Brian Jones) zone, live onstage, 1976

JOE STEVENS; ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

Cut some rug: Smith performing *The Coral Sea* with Kevin Shields at London's Queen Elizabeth [illegible] June 22, 2005

"Bob is a man of few words. We had a private talk. He said, 'The people want you. You should come back.' I was surprised he would even speak to me like that." Smith and Dylan sang a song together each night – "Dark Eyes" from *Empire Burlesque* – and "that little tour", she says, "got my confidence back." In Boston, she accidentally spilled a drink onstage and got down on her hands and knees to wipe it up. She didn't want to disrespect Dylan by leaving the stage dirty. "I'll clean up – I've no problem with that. As a wife and mother, I've cleaned up millions of messes."

Gone Again (1996), her first album in eight years, was written in Fred's memory, with Patti – on the title track – setting words to music that Fred had composed before seeing the fateful reviews of *Dream Of Life*. "*Cross over, boy... cross over,*" she calls out to him in "Beneath The Southern Cross", a song so spellbinding that you can see her arms outstretched and her head tilted to the stars. She was back and so was the shaman.

We left the restaurant some time ago. We're sitting in her hotel room. Now that the interview has reached the late '90s some questions move her to tears. Thinking about Kurt Cobain is too sad for her. Talking about her children ("Old-fashioned kids... and I love them") has her reaching for the tissues. She gets halfway into a story about Michael Stipe telling her she's special, and she's all over the place. "This complete stranger came into my life and... he helped me in every way... and... I'm sorry..."

We say nothing for a while. I look around the room. It's a generic London hotel room, cramped but tidy. A bouquet of flowers and a ghettoblaster are the only personal touches. Something about its simplicity reminds me of a scene that occurs often in *Just Kids*. Smith is always arranging her workspace. She straightens her pens, puts one object methodically alongside another. She brightens up. Yes! She admits to a fascination with artists' workspaces. She loves going on pilgrimages to see the desks and easels of her heroes: Delacroix, Victor Hugo, Bulgakov. I tell her the story of Bob Dylan visiting Neil Young's childhood home in Winnipeg a few years ago, and asking the owners if he could have a tour. Dylan paid particular attention to what was once Neil's bedroom, gazing out of the window, lost in thought. She loves the story. Here come the waterworks again. "You must think I'm the most emotional person... I'm such a sucker. Things make me cry. That's a beautiful story."

If Dylan ever wants a guided tour of Smith's childhood home, it still stands in South Jersey, a little two-bedroom house, not big enough for their family of six. She thinks Dylan would be shocked if he saw it. As a teenager, Patti used to sleep on the couch or in the laundry room. What might interest Dylan more than the house are the surrounding fields. The fields are where Patti first began to dream, to imagine and to write her own stories. In other words, if he wants a true pilgrimage, Dylan should concentrate less on the house and more on the fields. ●

***Banga** is released on June 4 on Columbia Records; Patti Smith plays Hop Farm on June 30; she tours the UK in September*

MATTIA ZOPPELLARO

THE CORAL SEA

"LANGUAGE WAS OBSOLETE..."

When Patti Smith wanted to perform her story-poem *The Coral Sea* in London for the 2005 Meltdown festival (which she curated), she needed a guitarist to improvise 'sonic scapes' behind her. She called Kevin Shields...

➤ "I was a huge My Bloody Valentine fan. Kevin and I met, and I just adored him. He has an abstract way of speaking that takes you right to the spheres. I gave him *The Coral Sea* and we sat among all his guitars and pedals at his studio in Camden. We just trusted each other. We didn't do any practising. Kevin wanted a sofa onstage. During the performance, something happened with one of his pedals and it got louder and louder. I couldn't concentrate, so I just threw the book aside and improvised the rest of it. At the end, I just lay down on the sofa and listened to Kevin. He was creating world upon world, taking me to a place where language was obsolete. That evening was an uncompromising merger of rock'n'roll and poetry, and it's one of the things I'm proudest of."

"I thought I'd probably make one record and go back to working in a bookstore"

PATTI SMITH

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CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Nile Rodgers

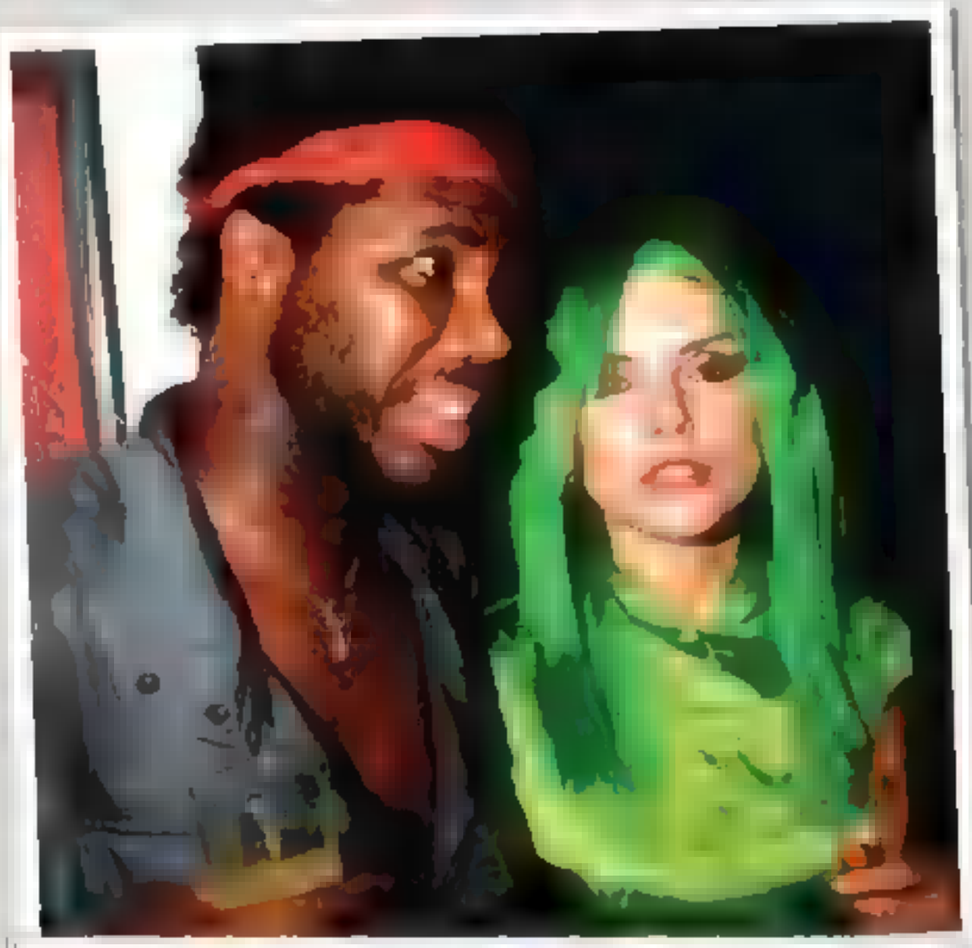
Good times! The Chic superfreak looks back on a glamorous career, co-starring Bowie, Jeff Beck, Madonna, Debbie Harry, Duran, JB – and the Thompson Twins!

NEW YORK, 1977

This is the first Chic promo photo [*Rodgers, second right*]. My stepfather was the sartorial guru. I knew Armani, Cerruti, what to get. There is no stylist involved in this shot, but if you go back to 1977, this shit is cutting-edge and happening. Because if you look at The Jackson 5, they're all wearing suits with tufted material, blue and pink and silver... we rolled out like that. This is a simple, cheap studio. We're a black group, they didn't spend shit on us.

ON TOUR, 1979

Now we're in full Chicism, as we used to call it. Look at Bernard [*Edwards, second right*] in his white tux... When we met, Bernard was 18, married with a child on the way, the straightest guy in the world! I'm wearing polished cotton that looked like leather, and my guitar is Plexiglas, so you can see we're getting into high-concept high-fashion. This was just before the "Disco Sucks" movement killed us. I've spent my career swimming upstream.



NEW YORK, 1981

Debbie [Harry] and me. I was certainly high. This is when we were doing *KooKoo*. Debbie was rebelling against the pop world that Blondie was forced into. Because most of us have survivor guilt, we have friends we come up with who we think are better, and you make it instead and feel weird. You start to sabotage your own career, because you want people to know there's so much more to you as an artist.

THE SAVOY, NEW YORK, 1983

With Bernard and David Bowie. David sees the world through abstract but precise details. Before we wrote *Let's Dance*, he walks in one day with a Little Richard album cover. Little Richard is wearing a red suit, and he's getting into a red Cadillac, and his hair is out to there. And David says, "Nile. That's rock'n'roll. That's what I want my record to sound like." *Let's Dance*'s cover is a homage to that, and David's hair is out to there.

NEW YORK, 1984

Something perfect, and something haywire. With Robert Plant, I did my thing as a producer. Jeff Beck came to the studio with not one song. He walks in with a cassette of Vangelis, *Chariots Of Fire*. And he says: "Nile, fuckin' 'ell, I was watching the movie and I thought to myself, 'I shoulda fuckin' done that.' Let's redo it..." I'm going, "I came here to work. You came here with a Vangelis cassette." I can still see that white cassette...

APOLLO THEATER, HARLEM, 1985

Rod Stewart sang "Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay" here, and I conducted the band. And it's funny, Rod, I think he can't stand me. But he adored my partner Bernard, they did many records together. Rod, when he and I are together, is always hitting me below the belt. "Oh, it's the 'great' Nile Rodgers." I can never figure it out. What did I do to you? When you were in the Jeff Beck Group, you were my hero...

LIVE AID, JFK STADIUM, PHILADELPHIA, 1985

With Madonna, backing the Thompson Twins. She was one of the biggest stars in the world, but they didn't invite her to sing on "We Are The World". So she sings at Live Aid, then plays tambourine with the Thompson Twins, and leaves! There's this big finale, with every superstar in the world. But Madonna? If you don't want me...

LONDON, 1986

Duran Duran. John Taylor was my closest friend. Nick [Rhodes] being the fashionista, we'd shop, stay up all night and party, do drugs. Simon [Le Bon] had a family, so he had to balance three lives – family, Duran and his hunger for racing motorcycles. When Andy [Taylor] got his first really huge flat, he had a cricket pitch in the living room! These are The Lads.

SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME, NEW YORK, 2003

I told James Brown here that he wrote the most genius lyric I had ever read: "*Thinking of losing that funk feeling* (laughs). We were in a limousine on our way to the ceremony. Oh man, I've gotta catch this plane." Then they played one of his songs. And I said to him, "Dude, I'm a bad motherfucker."

BARNES & NOBLE BOOKSHOP, NEW YORK, 2011

My book release party, with Coati Mundi. He and August Darnell were a big influence on Chic. The book was hard to write, but you see, there's nothing in my life that I hide. When I was out there drinking and drugging, it was an open book. The guy you see now, this is it, simple. I wish I was mysterious, I wish I were Bowie and you were wondering what I was thinking.

Nile Rodgers' autobiography ***Le Freak*** *is published by Sphere on July 5*

INTERVIEW: NICK HASTED. PHOTOS: JOHN BELLISSIMO/GETTY IMAGES, RON GALELLA/WIREIMAGE, K. DIAMOND/WIREIMAGE, SHAHAR AZRAN/WIREIMAGE, MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

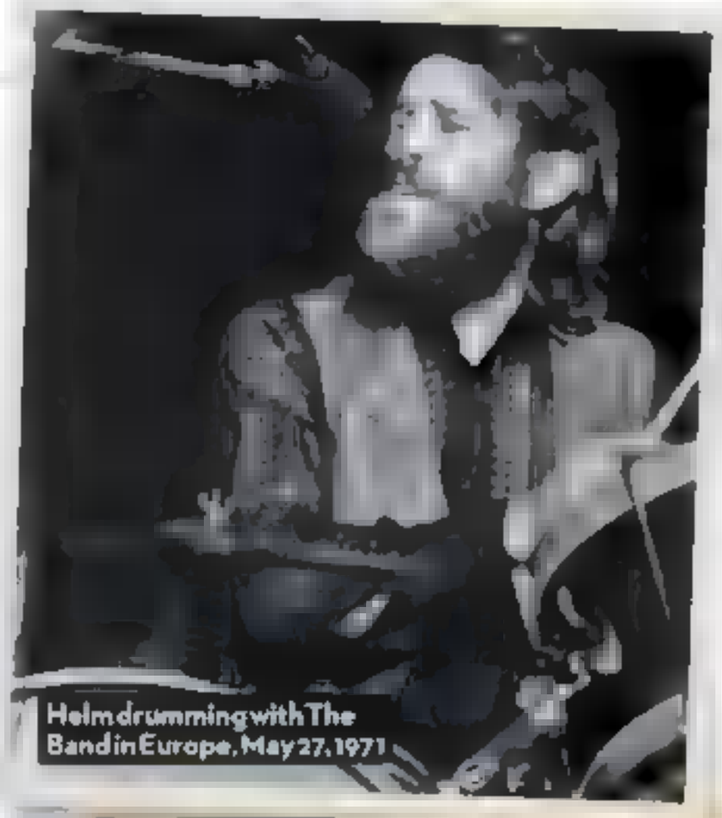
Levon Helm in Woodstock, 1969: "He'd never miss a lick..."

Put the load right on me...

LEVON HELM 1940-2012

Words: Andy Gill

Portrait: David Gahr



Helm drumming with The Band in Europe, May 27, 1971

WHEN I MET LEVON HELM up in his Woodstock home back in 2000, I was struck with a deep and piercing sadness. Levon had only recently emerged from treatment for throat cancer, and hearing that most poignantly gnarled of voices reduced to a hoarse, harsh rasp, it suddenly hit me that all three of The Band's great triumvirate of soulful, characterful singers, whose interleaving timbres had so vividly soundtracked much of my own life, were now silenced. Both Richard Manuel and Rick Danko had gone, and there was no way, I thought, as I watched him amble gamely over to the creek alongside his studio barn, that Levon Helm was ever going to be able to sing again.

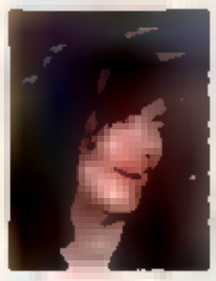
Of course, I had underestimated Levon's indomitable spirit. Despite being a scrawny bantamweight, he clearly had the wiry strength of a long-distance runner. No puny cancer was going to stop him doing the thing that gave his life meaning, goddamnit! And so he continued playing music, at first just drumming with his band The Barn Burners, then as the cancer went into remission, he began singing again, and eventually regained the full range that had characterised those inimitable performances with The Band – older and more worn, but none the worse for that.

In The Band, Levon's hickory-smoked voice embodied the whiskery pride and age-worn depredations of rural hardship, his characters embattled but unbowed by years and years of unrewarding toil and misfortune, leavened with a few glorious, warm memories of rip-roaring, good-ol'-boy indulgence. It was the voice of an old man looking back over his life and the history of his times, an act of vivid evocation fully the equal of any Hollywood thespian's Oscar-winning performance, coming as it did from a rock'n'roll drummer in his thirties.

I can vividly remember the first time I heard Levon, when The Band's debut single "The Weight" made it to the UK airwaves back in 1968, sounding like some naïve, earth-toned country throwback alongside the gaudy, silk'n'satin paisley psychedelia that was de rigueur at the time. Evoking a sepia-toned world of scuffed boots and sun-baked torpor, it brought to mind memories of every cowboy series I'd seen, with their homely values and pioneer spirits. And when the first photos of this mysterious band appeared, clad in drab, everyday mufti, sporting a whimsical selection of antique headgear and

"HE HAD THIS INCREDIBLE AURA"

Levon's co-producer on *Dirt Farmer* and *Electric Dirt*, and Midnight Ramble director



"Levon and I started our musical relationship about eight years ago. The first Ramble I played with him was just incredible. He still couldn't sing at that point, but had this incredible aura. Playing with him was all about joy. So the first image that comes to mind is him sitting behind those drums with that big grin.

"Soon after I started doing the Rambles with him, his daughter Amy asked if I would help do some recording. The idea was to go back to Levon's roots, to find some simple, honest songs and present them with Levon's voice. As we were doing both of those albums I could feel they were special. And then there was the triumph of him not being able to even whisper and then being able to sing again. His voice may have been ragged and torn, but he never lost an ounce of that honesty and purity that he always had in his best singing days. There's no doubt that Levon was at his happiest doing the Midnight Rambles. He told me this was the best band he'd ever worked with and the best musical experience he'd ever had." ROB HUGHES

"Levon made us think about dignity, loyalty, friendship, family."
GARTH HUDSON on his great Band mate

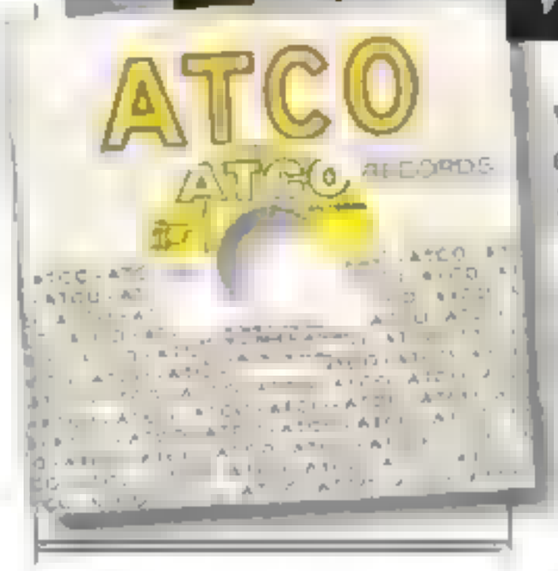
DAVID GAHR/GETTY, GUY EPPEL

scowling at the camera, that only added to the mystique. When the first album, *Music From Big Pink*, followed "The Weight" into UK record stores, there was no mention of The Band anywhere on the sleeve. Just the five bandmembers' names, listed on the back cover alongside the title, the front being taken up with an eccentric painting of the group by Bob Dylan. No record had ever striven so assiduously for anonymity, which along with the acclaim of fellow musicians – it instantly became The Beatles' favourite album of the time – piqued interest enough to ensure it became a fixture of any thinking music head's record deck.

Ironically, its follow-up featured nothing but the band's name on its front cover, over one of those sepia photos of the group, hatless this time, but still scowling. The original working title had been 'America', and there's no disputing its aptness: from the ragin' Cajun good times of "Rag Mama Rag" to the labour dispute of "King Harvest (Has Surely Come)", *The Band* is a brilliant distillation of the American mythos into 40 minutes of dazzling, diverse rock'n'roll. And in "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down", brought to life so movingly by Levon's aching, antiqued delivery, it evoked in three minutes the essence of a lingering grievance that took entire seasons of American Civil War documentaries to explain. A peerless evocation of an old, prelapsarian America, *The Band* remains the group's crowning glory, sowing the very first seeds of the Americana roots-music movement that forms such a crucial part of today's musical landscape.

Before The Band, it was all plastic and polythene round these parts. Back then, there was no real rock alternative to rock, if you see what I mean. Take a left-turn off the highway, and you were straight into folk music, or country, or blues, or jazz, genres already colonised by purists who rejected any hybridising with other music forms. The Band's second album changed all that.

Levon And The Hawks In the early '60s: (l-r) Bruce Bruno, Jerry Penfound, Rick Danko, Levon Helm, Richard Manuel, Garth Hudson, Robbie Robertson



Levon's was a voice you did not hear anywhere else on rock radio – and still don't

THE SON OF cotton-farmers Nell and Diamond Helm, Levon was born Mark Lavon on May 26, 1940, changing it to Levon later because that was how the members of Ronnie Hawkins' backing group The Hawks pronounced it. His boyhood in Marvell, Arkansas, was spent in rustic pursuits: he raised his own livestock to show at country fairs, and he became a state champion tractor-racer in his teens. But following in the footsteps of his daddy, a guitarist in a Saturday-night band, he also fell prey to the lure of music. Diamond taught him "Sitting On Top Of The World" when he was four years old, and when six he was captivated by Bill Monroe & His Blue Grass Boys at a local Midnight Ramble tent-show.

After embarking on a performing career with his sister as Lavon & Linda, seeing early Elvis shows in 1954 and 1955 changed Levon's life. Before long he had formed his own band, the Jungle Bush Beaters – rarely, one imagines, has a band name so guaranteed a great night out – then in 1957 Ronnie Hawkins came calling, and Levon set off on the road with the rockabilly wildcat.

This, of course, is where The Band's story began, as Hawkins gathered around himself the most kick-ass musicians he could find – first Levon, then blues-obsessed guitarist Robbie Robertson, bassist Rick Danko, multi-instrumentalist Garth Hudson, and pianist Richard Manuel. They recorded some devilish rock'n'roll with the Hawk, not least covers of "Bo Diddley" and "Who Do You Love?" that all but bested Diddley's originals; and Levon got to record his own first vocals, too. Listen to him, aged 19, bawling out Bobby Bland's "Farther On Up The Road" and Muddy Waters' "She's Nineteen Years Old" over Robbie Robertson's stinging guitar fills, and marvel at how these white-boy blues sides were cut by teenagers in 1961, well before the Stones' and Yardbirds' early blues excursions. But it was Richard Manuel's extraordinary vocal facility – surely the most soulful Canadian singer ever – which encouraged The Hawks to leave Hawkins and head out on their own.

"There weren't many singers that could sing with Richard Manuel," Levon told me. "He was like Patsy Cline, just blessed with that voice. Rick and myself, in the beginning, were just there to rest Richard up. I would do the novelty songs, and Rick would do some Sam Cooke, and then we'd get back to Richard, and Richard would sing the shit out of something!"

As Levon & The Hawks, they recorded a few rumbustious singles, the best being "He Don't Love You (And He'll Break Your Heart)", but were stuck playing clubs when they got their next break. It was about as big a break as they could have hoped for in 1965, but they'd hardly even heard of Bob Dylan when they got a call to try out as his backing band.

The Band's 1966 world tour with Dylan is one of the great legends of rock'n'roll, a tale of how the sound of modern rock was carved out in front of dismayed crowds offering the stormiest of receptions. But it almost meant the end of The Band, before it had begun. It speaks volumes about Levon's pride and self-belief, though, that after getting booed a few times, he upped sticks and took off to work on an oil-rig, rather than suffer such disdain.

"Didn't take me long – a week, two weeks," he told me. "Tell you the truth, it wasn't that much fun, ridin' around havin' people starin' at ya, and booin' your ass off, and nobody wantin' to be with ya, and nothin' funny happening. It wasn't like people were comin' up and puttin' money in my pockets and makin' me rich, or like I had girls all over me. It was a drag, a pain in the ass."

Thankfully, he later rejoined The Band up in Woodstock, where they were wood-shedding material with Dylan in the basement of their new backwoods "clubhouse", Big Pink. "Bob was showing us how to construct songs, and he was doing it right there with us, in front of us," Levon explained. "Him and Rick was writing 'This Wheel's On Fire', and him and Richard had wrote 'Tears Of Rage': Bob had set The Band on fire, and everybody was starting to write."

LEVON LOVED IT up in Woodstock, where they had enough time to work out arrangements, particularly the unusual three-part harmonies that became such a distinctive part of The Band's sound.

"We had all the time we wanted to practise Staples Singers songs and stuff like that, take old standards and try out the harmonies, swap them around," said Levon, who years later retained an extraordinary modesty about his own contribution to the group. "It ended up that a couple of the songs that I sang were what The Band got remembered for, got put on jukeboxes, and they

The Band perform with Dylan at a Woody Guthrie benefit at Carnegie Hall, NYC, January 20, 1969

Levon Helm and Garth Hudson, 1976

"I first met Levon when I had a little rock'n'roll group in London, Ontario, called Paul London & The Kapers. One night in 1957 we went to see Ronnie Hawkins & The Hawks play at the Brass Rail. They were a charming bunch. Rebel Payne on bass, Will "Pop" Jones on piano, Robbie [Robertson] on guitar, Levon on drums and Ronnie out front. I didn't talk to Levon that night, but about a year later, we were playing in Detroit and The Hawks were playing downtown. Levon and Robbie dropped in to check me out. That was the first time I met him, at The Torch Bar on East Jefferson in Detroit.

"When it came to joining The Hawks, Ronnie and Levon came to talk to my parents. They said they needed me to teach them music. So that's where it all began. Levon and Richard [Manuel] loved R'n'B, people like Bobby 'Blue' Bland, and it required some knowledge of chord structure. So we worked on that, changing chords here and there so the music sounded contemporary. We were focused on change. A change was gonna come, and it did.

"I keep thinking about these funny little stories, like when we were in Toronto and Levon drove on the sidewalk for about half a block on Bloor Street, because we were running a little late. If you were running late in Ronnie's band you'd be fined about $10, which was a fair portion – or more like an unfair portion – of what we were earning. That ride got a little scary but Levon got us there on time. When we started out on our own, Levon was the leader, right from the beginning.

"Levon's smile had the ability to bring people close to each other"

GARTH HUDSON

"Playing with Levon in The Band always reminded me of a story I heard about Duke Ellington. [*Tenor sax player*] Ben Webster used to say he'd make a change and you'd never see him do it because it happened so quickly. It was the same with Levon. He'd make changes that would be done almost with signals. He used code words, too. If somebody made a mistake, Levon would say the whole thing had become "angly goggled". Also, "official" came up a lot. It meant something close to the language of a certain area – the Delta blues, for example.

"The things that Levon has made us think about are dignity, loyalty, friendship, family. As Rick Danko would say: 'Taking care of the neighbourhood.' The last time I saw Levon was in the hospital just before he passed away. Before that, it was at one of the Rambles a couple of months ago. They were always a lot of fun. What a fine group of musicians he had.

"He is a true hero and has left us grieving. Levon's been on the front page of every newspaper in this area and there's been some real nice stuff said about him. Looking at the pictures of him, the thing that stands out above everything is his smile. That smile had the ability to bring people close, both to him and to each other. It's probably the biggest smile we've ever seen." ROB HUGHES

GETTY

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The Band in *The Last Waltz*, 1976 – featuring, on the right of the drum riser, Paul Butterfield, Eric Clapton and Ronnie Wood

started saying, 'The Band's got three lead singers,' all that kind of bullshit, which was just record company hype."

It wasn't hype, of course. Just typical modesty on Levon's part. A huge part of the enduring appeal of "The Weight", "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down", "Rag Mama Rag" and "Up On Cripple Creek" is that Levon brought them to life with such evocative, distinctive character: his was a voice you simply did not hear anywhere else on rock radio – and still don't, really.

Left to their own devices, however, the musicians' lairier sides came to the fore, as they developed a reputation for whooping it up, along with the booze and drug habits that would play their part in the band's eventual break-up.

"The suits gave us credit cards, that was the downfall," Levon confided to me. "We would just go over to Hertz and rent us new cars. Behind Big Pink there was a field next to the apple orchard, about the size of a good softball field, just big enough for two vehicles to really cut some shines in! At night, the grass is wet, and it's a whole lot of fun to get out there in new cars that can really go, just run at each other and cut the wheel! We'd dance with each other, in the cars!"

Levon's affection for automotive fun came to the fore when The Band reluctantly played the nearby Woodstock festival in 1969. Following their 35-minute set, they found their way home blocked by cars mired in mud. But not for long. "I hired a guy with a bulldozer to hook up to a station-wagon that somebody had gave me the key to," remembered Levon. "We got in that sumbitch, the guy cranked the bulldozer up, and over hill, over dale, we hit the fuckin' trail – he drug us through a coupla fields, and two ditches, onto a gravel road, and we got on 209 and come on the hell home."

By that time, The Band were riding high on acclaim for their first two albums, the mysterious *Music From Big Pink* followed by the historical tableaux of *The Band*.

"It didn't mean we were starting to get big-ass cheques from Capitol," Levon noted, just the tip of an iceberg of bitterness he nursed for years about the group's business affairs. "We didn't start buying ourselves Ferraris and shit! I bought myself a new mandolin, and Richard got himself a Pontiac Grand Prix. We wrecked that right away!"

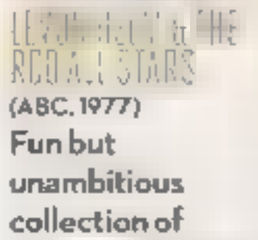
As with many groups, the main bone of contention within The Band itself was what some felt was the inequitable distribution of publishing royalties for songs to which they believed they had made a significant contribution. "Publishing is the big bear in the woods that all bands have to beware of, that will eat bands for lunch," Levon told me. "Make sure that sonofabitch is shackled, muzzled and tied, and all the bandmembers are sittin' right a-straddle of the bastard at all times, or he will eat their band up."

Which is exactly what happened to The Band, according to him. When the others discovered that Robbie Robertson was getting the lion's share of the publishing, they stopped contributing much to the arrangements, and the records dipped in quality accordingly: there were still breathtaking moments, but the texture and grain of albums like *Stage Fright* and *Cahoots* was undeniably diminished.

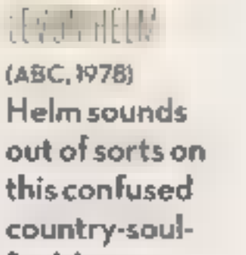
Levon's later work showed his enduring ability to perform heart surgery on the emotions

BY THE TIME The Band brought down the curtain on *The Last Waltz*, their earlier relocation to Los Angeles (where they had set up a new clubhouse-cum-studio, Shangri-La, in a former bordello) left some of them footloose and feckless, but Levon threw himself into work, recording several albums with his own RCO All-Stars, a mix of seasoned session players and star chums. Though variable in quality, they included some fine performances, Levon's aptitude for the New Orleans mode coming through strongly

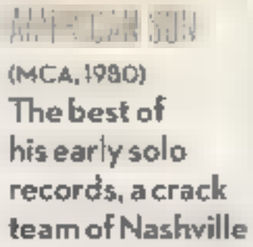
Your guide to the Bandman's solo records



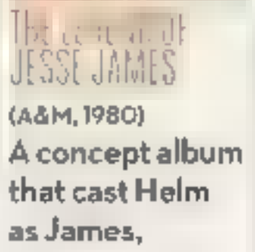
LEVON HELM & THE RCO ALL STARS
(ABC, 1977)
Fun but unambitious collection of bar-band belters featuring Dr John, Paul Butterfield, Booker T Jones, Donald 'Duck' Dunn and Steve Cropper.
(6/10)



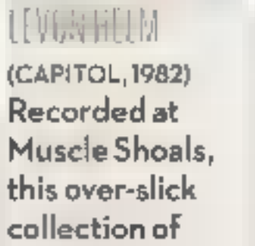
LEVON HELM
(ABC, 1978)
Helm sounds out of sorts on this confused country-soul-funk brew, although "Play Something Sweet" and "Standing On A Mountain Top" are fine indeed.
(5/10)



AMERICAN SON
(MCA, 1980)
The best of his early solo records, a crack team of Nashville sessioneers help Helm find his country-rock stride.
(8/10)



THE ADVENTURES OF JESSE JAMES
(A&M, 1980)
A concept album that cast Helm as James, alongside Johnny Cash, Rodney Crowell and Emmylou Harris. Though patchy, Helm and Cash on "The Death Of Me" is worth revisiting.
(7/10)



LEVON HELM
(CAPITOL, 1982)
Recorded at Muscle Shoals, this over-slick collection of covers ("Money", "Summertime Blues") has its moments, notably "Get Out Your Big Roll Daddy" and "The Got Song".
(6/10)

Helm, this picture and below, holding fort at one of his Midnight Rambles, Woodstock, July 18, 2009

"A TRUE AMERICAN SPIRIT"

"I first met Levon in '68, when I was working at Sound In, a high-end stereo place up in Woodstock. I was about 17. All the guys from The Band would come in there. Levon would invite me over to his place with my Telecaster. The Band were like heroes to me, because they lived in my town and I loved that music.

"I started playing with Levon's All-Stars in the late '70s and early '80s and it was him who got me in with The Band. I owe just about everything to Levon. He was a very open, generous person who would definitely speak his mind. He had a very powerful presence that came across in his playing. He'd hear if one note was off-pitch, he'd never miss a lick. He was a great bandleader and I learned how to play rhythm just by being next to him for 30 years.

"After The Band stopped in 1999, somewhere later on Levon had gotten throat cancer and couldn't sing. He went through all of that and was able to sing again. I've never seen a comeback like it. Levon just came on full force. He was a true American spirit. And a gentleman, a great friend and mentor to me for my whole life. I will really miss him." ROB HUGHES

on songs like "Sing, Sing, Sing...", while "Audience For My Pain" demonstrated his enduring ability to perform open-heart surgery on the emotions with his voice.

He also began a sideline as a character actor, drawing good reviews for playing alongside Sam Shepard as Chuck Yeager's air engineer in *The Right Stuff*, and his portrayal of Loretta Lynn's father in 1980's *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Asked to record a version of Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon Of Kentucky" for the soundtrack, he ended up recording an entire album of country material, *American Son*, with a top Nashville session crew.

But it was in his own studio in Woodstock that Levon felt most at home.

"The studio was where I wanted to be," he explained. "I didn't want anybody takin' my drums down and packin' 'em up after I'd got 'em soundin' good. It takes a while to sweeten a set of drums: drums sound like hell when you first hit 'em – you got to sweeten 'em, take tape and your drum key and loosen the heads and tape pieces of leather to it sometimes to make it sound good. After you've got 'em sweetened, you want to leave 'em the hell alone!"

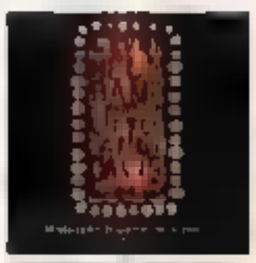
Applying the same keen acoustical attention to his high-ceilinged barn studio, Levon used local bluestone walls and exposed joists to break up echoing reflections, the construction being held together with wooden pegs. It was here in the mid-2000s, following his treatment for cancer, that Levon established his own weekly Midnight Rambles, at which his band performed alongside guest stars ranging from Hubert Sumlin to Emmylou Harris, Donald Fagen to Allen Toussaint, Cassandra Wilson to Gillian Welch.

One regular player at the Midnight Rambles was former Dylan sideman Larry Campbell, who in 2007 served as producer for Levon's miraculous return to recording as a singer. *Dirt Farmer* found his voice restored to something like the weatherbeaten glory of "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down", and was used in a context that made a virtue of its hoarse earthiness, on a series of brooding country ballads and blues. Mingling new material by Steve Earle and Paul Kennerley with songs he'd learnt as a child, it was a wonderfully evocative affair, Levon's distinctive gnarled tones bringing the old times starkly to life, not least on a haunted version of "False Hearted Lover Blues". It deservedly walked off with the Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album the following year.

2009's *Electric Dirt* was even better, amping up the concerns covered acoustically on its predecessor, without sacrificing the rootsy grain. The Grateful Dead's "Tennessee Jed" was done as a frisky R'n'B cakewalk; and Muddy Waters' "You Can't Lose What You Ain't Never Had" and "Stuff You Gotta Watch" were driven by mandolin and accordion, respectively. The theme of rural decay was most clearly rendered on Levon's own "Growing Trade", with its litany of bank loans and "*seasons of calamity*". There could have been no more appropriate winner of the inaugural Grammy for Best Americana Album.

Electric Dirt was as good as anything Levon had recorded, and when it proved to be his final studio release, it brought a satisfying closure to his career, particularly the echoes of "The Weight" that were discernible in "Growing Trade". It was testament not just to the great taste and musical abilities he embodied, but to the steadfastness with which he remained true to values – blue-collar empathy, Southern gentility, cussed determination – that are so rarely encountered in the entertainment business.

SUGAR HILL
(WOODSTOCK RECORDS, 1997)
A document of Helm's mid-'90s live outings with Woodstock band The Crowmatix, the tracklist features Band classics "Don't Ya Tell Henry" and "Rag Mama Rag".
(6/10)



MIDNIGHT RAMBLE SESSIONS VOL I-II
(LEVONHELM.COM, 2005)
Two excellent double live sets recorded at the come-all-ye concerts held in Helm's Woodstock "barn". Guests include Garth Hudson and Dr John.
(7/10)

DIRT FARMER
(VANGUARD, 2007)
Larry Campbell directs traffic on a spirited echo of The Band's signature sound. Following throat cancer, Helm's every imperfect note rings true.
(8/10)

ELECTRIC DIRT
(VANGUARD, 2009)
Broadening the scope of *Dirt Farmer*, on his final studio album Helm claims songs by Muddy Waters ("Stuff You Gotta Watch"), Randy Newman ("Kingfish") and the Dead ("Tennessee Jed") as his own.
(9/10)

RAMBLE AT THE RYMAN
(VANGUARD, 2011)
Recorded in Nashville in 2008 with John Hiatt, Sheryl Crow and Billy Bob Thornton, this live set provides a triumphant overview of Helm's career.
(8/10)

GRAEME THOMSON

REDFERNS/GETTY, GUY EPPEL

THE MAKING OF

The Drowners

SUEDE

Inspired by glam and "engorged flesh", Suede's debut single got the band celebrity fans and a record deal, and helped change the course of '90s indie…

FOR SUEDE, IT was, in many ways, the worst of times. Singer Brett Anderson had broken up with girlfriend Justine Frischmann, losing along the way his residence in her plush Kensington flat, and her hustle as ersatz band manager.

It was also the best of times. In his new, meaner lodgings in London's seamier Westbourne Park, Anderson made a giant leap forward as a writer, shedding his Momus-indebted flourishes for a new style of lyrics that romantically recast his own penurious lifestyle. He grew closer to guitarist Bernard Butler, and their songwriting partnership gave up its first real fruits.

"When someone is going out with someone in the band and they're going home together you can never break that down," remembers Butler. "Brett was a hidden character behind Justine. So when that ended, that's when we started writing good things together. Justine lent me the money for a Les Paul, for which I'm eternally grateful."

Suede had been ignored in their first incarnation. Now, revelling in this anonymity, the definitive lineup began to develop their personality and present it in their songs.

"We started to see ourselves as a little force," says Butler. "We used to say, 'We have the power', like from Bowie's 'Quicksand'. It didn't matter what anybody else thought, as long as you had hold of this thing called The Power."

Equipped with this Crowley-derived mantra, Suede began working in a Hackney rehearsal room on their new, glam-inspired sound. They recorded a three-track demo, and offered it to the music business. One small corner of the music business listened, and, with Morrissey and Blur looking on, an underclass anthem was born.

JOHN ROBINSON

TIM PATON; SIMON GILBERT

KEY PLAYERS

Brett Anderson
Vocals

Bernard Butler
Guitars

Mat Osman
Bass

Simon Gilbert
Drums

Buller
Producer

MAT OSMAN: "The Drowners" was from the first batch of stuff we did that sounded fully formed and not like what we had been doing before at all – it had weird edges to it that other stuff we had written didn't. The stuff we'd been doing before was… Smithsier. But "The Drowners" doesn't jangle at all.

BRETT ANDERSON: Me and Bernard were starting to click as songwriters when we wrote "The Drowners". We thought it was a pretty amazing song, and we demoed it and "To The Birds" (and "My Insatiable One", at Rocking Horse Studios in South London) and sent it to people in the record industry. No-one was particularly interested [*laughs*]. We were quite shunned early on, with exactly the same material that we were later hailed for, which was quite a strange situation.

BERNARD BUTLER: Justine left the band in the middle of 1991. The whole thing with Justine was a massive slap round the face for Brett, in creatively a very positive way. He started singing in a different way and we dropped all our material. We would cancel rehearsals until we had a brilliant song – then we'd go to rehearsal with one song and play it for four hours. Then we'd record it and go home.

OSMAN: Justine had more money than the rest of us put together, so we were OK for rehearsing and stuff like that. "The Drowners" was recorded when we were the most poor we'd ever been.

ANDERSON: "The Drowners" was a sort of celebration of that kind of lifestyle, I suppose… a drifting, stonery, specifically British lifestyle, wandering about roundabouts. That's kind of how I spent much of the 1990s. There's something deeply suspect about social tourism, but this was saying, "This is how I live, and I'm proud of it. I won't join the rat race. I won't be a puppet to advertising. I won't buy into what society tells me to buy into. I'll just live within my means." There's something quite pure and quite beautiful about that.

OSMAN: We took it to every record company and they were completely uninterested. We'd go out every night having written "The Drowners" and watch bands, thinking, 'How the *fuck* are they signed and we're not?' And not really

> *"It's a very sensual sort of song, isn't it...? I don't really know what the fucking thing's about!"*
>
> BRETT ANDERSON

Suede in London, January 1992: (l-r) Butler, Anderson, Gilbert, Osman. Below: the band's contract for the recording session

realising that cyclical thing that happens – that at that time every record company was looking for the next Ride.

BUTLER: I remember me and him [Anderson] used to walk round London at that time, like Withnail and I or something, thinking we were really fantastic. Actually looking like an absolute couple of pricks, with our Oxfam clothes. We really didn't mean anything.

OSMAN: Signing to Nude [*for a two-single deal*] was the most fantastic feeling, after the voicelessness of it. Saul [*Galpern, Nude records boss*] and Ed [*Buller, Suede producer*] took you seriously and would talk about you in the same terms as your heroes. It's tremendously empowering. Otherwise, you're thinking, 'Am I just being deluded?' One of the reasons the records sound as confident and as joyful as they do is because we'd found those people – people who had seen great gigs and made great records.

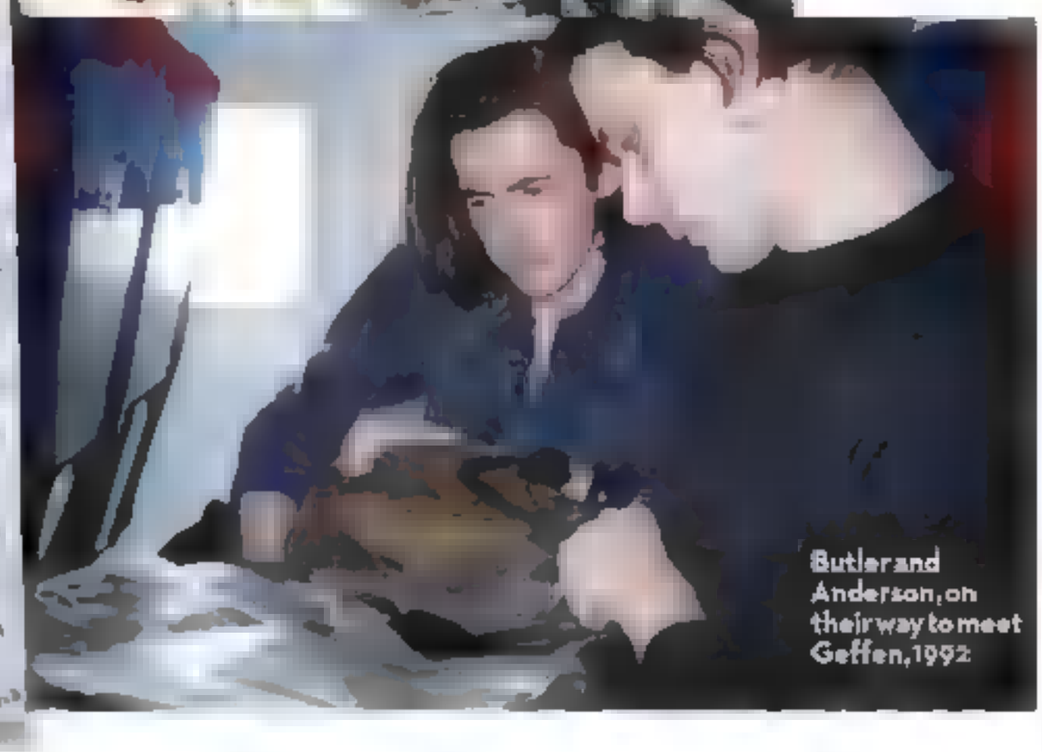
SIMON GILBERT: Once we'd signed with Nude, we had EastWest after us... Once word got out you were signed, everyone started knocking on your door. We got flown over to LA by Geffen and then a couple of weeks later by Sony. It was a free for all. The best thing was that they would open the record cupboard for you after these meetings, and you'd leave with a bag full of free records.

OSMAN: Our main income for six months was getting free records from these record companies, then racing each other to the Record And Tape Exchange in Notting Hill. I remember going there with this Bruce Springsteen live boxset which we had got off Columbia and thinking, 'Fucking hell, this is going to be worth thirty quid...' I got in there and the guy said "Sorry mate, the rest of the band have been in first..." and seeing three of them up on the wall.

ED BULLER: Suede were signed to a good friend of mine that I hadn't seen for a while – Saul Galpern. I knew Saul when I worked at Island Records. He liked some stuff that I'd done since I left Island, so he rang me up. He didn't have a lot of money but he knew that I was fairly proficient at doing quick little records fairly proficiently and on the cheap. He knew I was a big glam fan, so he said, "I think I've got a band that are right up your street."

ANDERSON: I think Ed respected that the songs were very fully formed. It wasn't a Frankie Goes To Hollywood situation. The songs sounded great when we played them live,

Bernard Butler in Amsterdam, April 1993; below left, Simon Gilbert's diary from the week of recording, March 1992



Butler and Anderson, on their way to meet Geffen, 1992

and it was more of a question of capturing that and that vibe, and adding a few touches. He didn't treat it as another scruffy record that nobody really cares about. We very much believed in the songs, and what the band was about and the spirit of the band. It was very special and kind of against the grain.

BUTLER: I really liked Ed, he was a great inspiration because he's quite an ordinary kind of fella, but he had this depth of technical nous that I was desperate to mine. He was easy to take the piss out of and have a laugh with, and you need someone like that in a band. He got what I wanted to do. I had all the parts – we all did. We didn't want to record live to prove we could play live, we wanted to make great pop records.

BULLER: A massive thing for me was Bernard, because he was a proper virtuoso guitarist. I've known a few. I did a session with Eric Clapton about three years before that – he's a nice bloke and he can play the guitar, but it isn't my style of guitar playing. I just got Bernard straight away – I thought it was going to be so much fun. That was a big part of it: Bernard was very easygoing but analytical. What we didn't want to do was make it a clone of a '70s record, we wanted to visit it in a different way. The guitar parts were all showing off – it was like a fight for who was more important, the guitarist or the singer. At the end of the day, you know who's going to win, but for a minute it was touch and go.

ANDERSON: "The Drowners" was a strong statement. No disrespect to anyone else, but I've always liked that "us and them", it's inspired me in my music tastes: growing up in the early 1980s there were lots of tribes in the playground, and I wanted Suede to be like that, a love-us-or-hate-us situation.

BULLER: Brett, like a lot of great singers, put on a performance, an inflection, like David Bowie and Marc Bolan, a "singing voice". If you imagine there's a dial attached to a singer's forehead that measures their mannerisms from low to extreme. I knew the only thing I had to do with Brett was to dial that down a bit. "*She's taking me over...*" being an example. When we started on that, it was very extreme, because of the live thing, a way of getting the spotlight back on him. I know he looks back on some of those early recordings with a certain discomfort. I tell him he shouldn't, as it made them so distinctive at the time. The only direction I ever gave Brett was "Dial it back a bit on that line..." He took it well. He trusted me.

BUTLER: The homoerotic references, it was something I had no knowledge of or interest in until people started talking to him about it in interviews. It hadn't occurred to me that we were behaving in a camp sort of a way or anything like that. It wasn't a homoerotic kind of thing. We behaved in quite an effeminate way because that was the kind of boys we'd grown up to be. Baggy had been quite macho, quite masculine. I didn't see any homosexual references, it was just the way we were as people. We were happy to explore all aspects of who we were as people.

ANDERSON: It's a very sensual sort of song, isn't it, "The Drowners"? It's got kind of sexual signposts which you can follow... at your peril, wherever you wanna go with it. I don't really know what the fucking thing's about. I don't think any writer does, anyone who tells you what it's about is misunderstanding their art. It's a writer's job to lead you somewhere, to offer flavours. It's about a sort of desperate state of... flailing around in yards of engorged flesh. Of course, everything you write is from experience. But a song isn't a book, isn't a page from a diary. You're taking the art in a different direction. It's closer to poetry, though not as close as people think – you're suggesting things and playing with words a lot of the time.

OSMAN: "The Drowners" was the Suede badge. I remember doing a Christmas show to four people, so selling out the Camden Falcon was like selling out Madison Square Garden. We don't work well without an audience. That was the first time people were singing stuff back to us.

ANDERSON: When you first play gigs, there's a "D"-shaped-space in front of the stage, which people don't really dare to go in before the band is signed, because they're frightened that they might infect them with their failure. But suddenly, there were people there. We played the Camden Falcon and Morrissey turned up and Suggs turned up, and there were people right in my face at the front of the stage. There wasn't this... gulf of horror in front of me. It suddenly changed from four people standing at the back, to full-on hysteria. It was kind of wonderful.

BUTLER: I think it's probably the best-sounding thing we ever did. It still sounds really raw and fresh and colourful. I'm proud of it – it didn't sound like anybody else. We were very focused on making great records. We didn't want to be *successful*. Our hearts were set on making something great.

Suede play ***Hop Farm Festival*** *on Sunday July 1*

FACT FILE

- **Written by** Anderson/Butler
- **Recorded at:** Protocol Studios, London
- **Released:** May 11, 1992
- **Label:** Nude
- **UK Chart Position:** 49

SIMON GILBERT

TIMELINE

Mid-1991 Justine Frischmann leaves Suede

Autumn 1991 Butler and Anderson work on new Suede material, chiefly "The Drowners", "To The Birds" and "My Insatiable One" (then called "High Wire")

Jan 4, 1992 Suede play *NME* "ON for 92" gig at London New Cross Venue, on the bill between Fabulous and Midway Still

March 2, 1992 Suede enter Protocol Studios to record "The Drowners". The record is worked on Monday-Friday and mixed Monday and Tuesday of the following week

May 11, 1992 "The Drowners" is released

March 29, 1993 Debut album *Suede* released. It goes gold on the second day of release

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Tom Waits *in* London

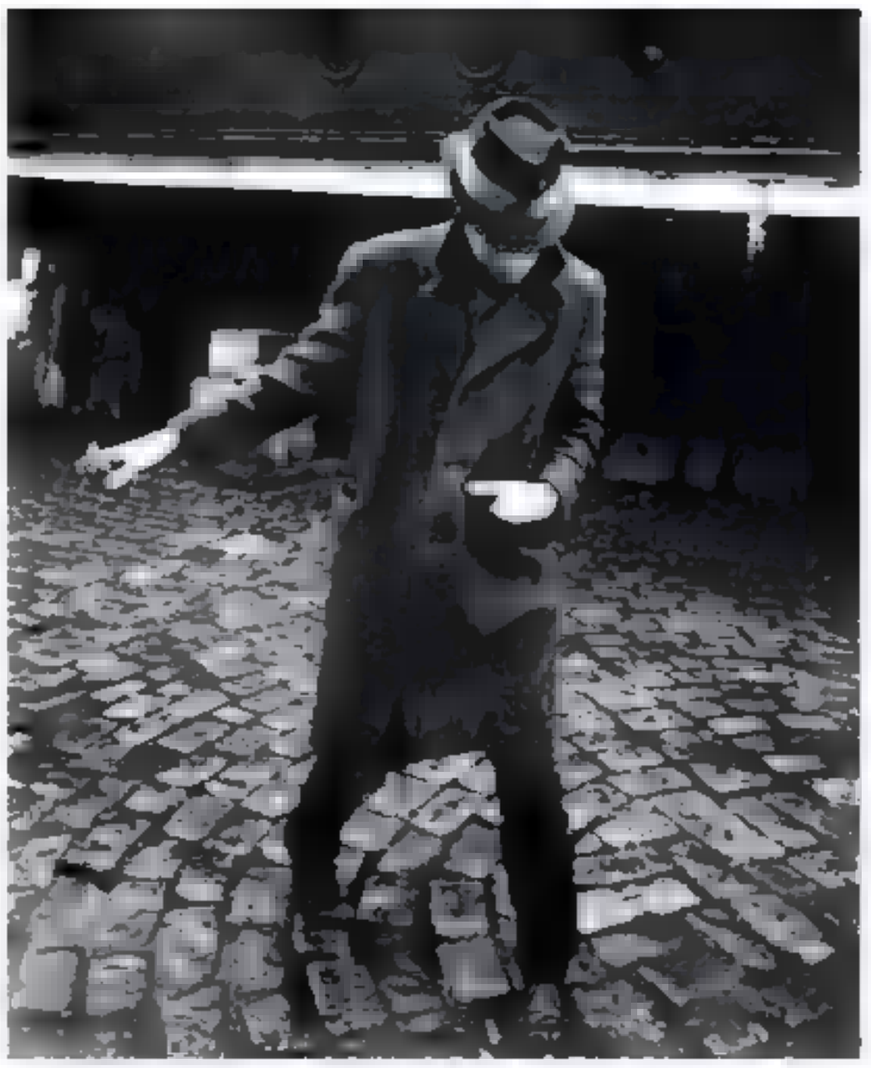
A colourful character on a grey, miserable day at the docks: "We captured a bit of the Tom Waits magic," says photographer Adrian Boot

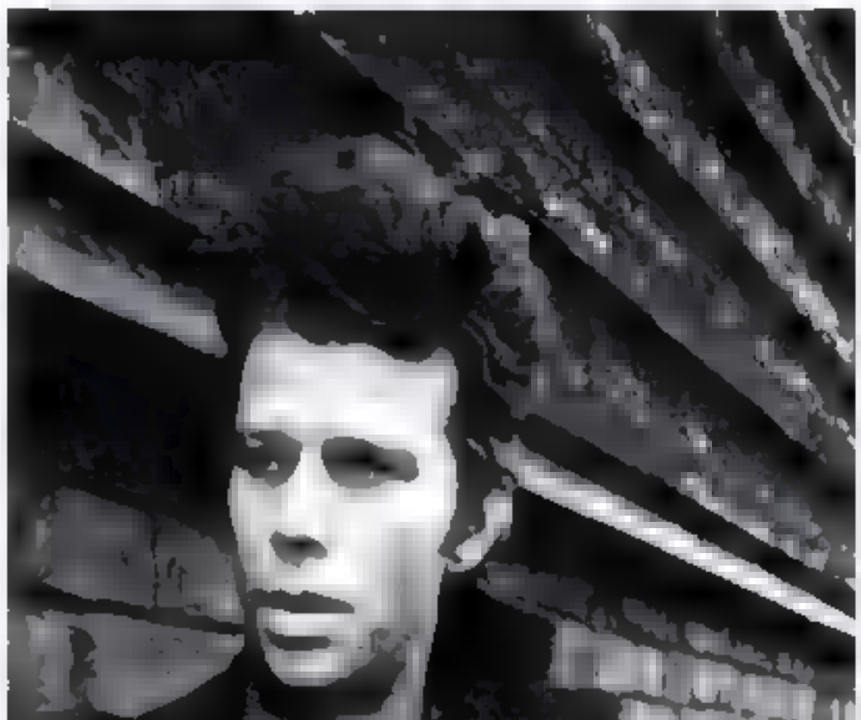
Words & photographs: Adrian Boot

"It was March 1981 and Tom Waits was in London on the Heartattack & Vine tour," Adrian Boot recalls. "*Melody Maker* were doing an interview with him and I was doing the pictures. I'd listened to the music and decided we needed to find an urban location, but it had to be somewhere a bit different. I was bored with the dull repertoire of studio shots and was on the hunt for interesting places to shoot.

"St Katharine Docks by the Tower of London had recently been redeveloped and I'd been there a couple of times and it seemed fit. So we met Tom in Kensington on a grey, miserable Saturday lunchtime and drove him across London to the dock.

We took him for a meal at the Dickens Inn and to give him a taste of what Americans like to regard as 'authentic England' and he became very relaxed. When we went outside to do the shoot it was a really grim day and I was struggling with the light. But in the end the weather worked to our advantage, as it made the pictures shadowy and dark. Everything fell into place and I was thrilled to bits when I processed the film. I could see immediately the pictures were special – and that only happens once in a while. I'd like to think we captured a little bit of the Tom Waits magic that day."





"We had the whole of the dock more or less to ourselves because the weather was so depressing. Tom is standing in front of the window of a pet shop when the couple in the background hurried past. They were just about the only people we saw all day!"

"When it started to rain, that seemed to cheer Tom up. The setting and the weather, the texture of the cobbles and the brickwork, the hat and the coat – it was pure luck how it all came together, really."

"Tom looked great. Quite fantastic. But initially I was suspicious that the look was a bit of a cliché. I thought, 'Here we go again, another artist in costume, pretending not be himself.' But as we went on, it became obvious that he was quite different from almost anyone else I'd worked with." ⓤ

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10 Masterpiece **9** Essential **8** Excellent
7 Very good **6** Good but uneven
4-5 Mediocre **1-3** Poor

THIS MONTH: DEXYS | PATTI SMITH | BEACHWOOD SPARKS & MORE

AARON FARLEY

TRACKLIST

1 Oh Susannah
2 Clementine
3 Tom Dula
4 Gallows Pole
5 Get A Job
6 Travel On
7 High Flyin' Bird
8 Jesus' Chariot
9 This Land Is Your Land
10 Wayfarin' Stranger
11 God Save The Queen

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE

Americana

REPRISE

The loosest group in rock reunite with Young for this dark, raw and thrilling slice of electrified folk. *By Andy Gill*

7/10

THERE'S ALWAYS A certain shambolic, rough'n'ready flakiness about Neil Young's intermittent exploits with Crazy Horse, the feeling that he's re-establishing a natural equilibrium tilted too much towards the prim and proper on his more polite mainstream country-rock outings. (Not that there's been too many of those recently, mind.)

So it seems pretty much like business as usual when "Oh Susannah", the lead-off track here, stumbles into action with the relaxed, extempore manner of an after-hours blues jam. His bandmates chant the title as Neil launches into the first verse, and it's immediately noticeable how the outward jollity of Stephen Foster's minstrel standard has been supplanted by an air of brooding menace, just as Young's grimy electric guitar has replaced the "*b-a-n-jay-o*" lyrically set upon the protagonist's knee. As ever, there's a gnarled appeal to the band's riffing, with high-register harmonies sweetening the chorus, and if you turn up the volume right at the end you can hear Neil commenting as the song grinds to a halt, "Sounds really funky, gets into a good groove."

The mighty Horse ride on: Poncho Sampedro, Billy Talbot, Neil Young, Ralph Molina

This is the opening to *Americana*, Young's nostalgic anthology of the kind of popular folk ballads that he might have sung when first learning to play folk guitar. Songs like "Travel On", "Clementine" and "Tom Dooley" (here, "Tom Dula") were staples of folk clubs during the first folk boom – not the '60s one with Bob and Joan and Peter, Paul & Mary, but the late '50s one when The Kingston Trio topped the US charts with rousing singalongs of ballads whose deeper meanings were lost amid the clean-cut bonhomie which, while suggesting an alternative to the suburban dreams of the Eisenhower era, was perfectly palatable to those suburban sensibilities.

So when Neil and Crazy Horse here focus on exposing the darker sides to these folk standards, are they simply returning the songs to their roots, or making an oblique commentary on the violence and bloodlust that has always underscored American history? After all, if murder ballads were deemed acceptable fare for postwar suburbanites, what does that say about the assumptions of that society? And given that, who could cavil about the latterday popularity of gangsta-rap? Is it not just another set of fables about romanticised outlaws?

Take "Tom Dula" here, stripped of its Kingston Trio charm and left exposed as a plodding murder ballad, grimly celebrating the killer's just desserts. It chugs along gamely, with the band offering a ragged, drunken-sounding title-chant as counterpoint to Young's lead vocal, like a bunch of soused barflies stumbling from a saloon to whoop it up around the gallows. Even with the more formal falsetto harmonies presumably added later, it's a mean-spirited performance compared to the ebullient singalong of memory. Likewise, "Clementine" – cemented in '60s memories by years of Huckleberry Hound cartoons – here has a vast lowering cloud of menace hovering over it, as a rolling thunder tattoo of tom-toms drives the song to its grim conclusion through a prickly bush of dirty fuzz-guitar arpeggios. And while I don't recall Huck Hound ever reaching the grisly lamentation, "*Though in life I used to hug her, in death I draw the line*", I can't help wondering, what on earth were Hanna-Barbera feeding us kids?

Given the way that Young is revealing the darker aspects of seemingly charming songs, and presenting them in a kind of gothick blues trudge, the upbeat, jaunty approach afforded the self-evidently gloomy "Gallows Pole" seems quixotic by comparison. It's like a two-step country dance, in which the doomed man's repetitive, rejected plaint seems mocked by the jauntiness and the clean, high-register sheen of the harmonies. The folk-club standard "Travel On" is taken in similarly chipper fashion, with some pleasingly astringent lead breaks for Neil taking the melody into virgin territory. Confirming suspicions that these tracks are all pretty much first or second takes, the song sags slightly after the last chorus, as if the band were caught preparing for the end, half a minute too soon, having to quickly pick up the slack and bring it on home properly.

The appearance of "Get A Job" midway through *Americana* is welcome, but bewildering, a token blast of grease-monkey doowop blessed with more enthusiasm than accuracy, which lends it a certain déclassé charm. If, say, The Beach Boys had covered this, every "*yipyipyip*" and "*shananana*" would have been primped and preened to the point of pristine lifelessness, but here the air of amateurishness anchors it firmly on the street-corner. Neil's simple guitar break is entirely

Recorded at: Audio Casa Blanca
Produced by: Neil Young and John Hanlon, with Mark Humphreys
Personnel includes: Billy Talbot, Ralph Molina, Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro and Neil Young

HOW TO BUY NEIL YOUNG'S MOST AMERICAN ALBUMS

Here are the Canadian's records that best sum up his adopted homeland

After The Gold Rush 1970

Establishing Young as a commercial force, *ATGR* was suffused with proto-Americana sounds and concerns – as on "Southern Man" – and set within an innovative country-rock format that took in "Cripple Creek Ferry" and an aching cover of Don Gibson's "Oh Lonesome Me".

9/10

Freedom 1989

After years of genre-hopping chaos, Neil got firmly back on track with the homeland parables of *Freedom*, notably the two versions of "Rockin' In The Free World" which bookend the album, and the brooding nine-minute urban folk-blues "Crime In The City (Sixty To Zero Part 1)". Also includes the original "Wrecking Ball".

9/10

Prairie Wind 2005

Prairie Wind was a return to Young's spiritual heartland, with melodies echoing his heyday, and a nostalgia for American myths, especially the musical ones espoused in "He Was The King". Though its most American quality may be the way that the deeper he searches the past for guidance, the less certain he seems of anything.

8/10

A Treasure 2011

Recorded with the same musicians, in the same era, as the ur-Americana *Old Ways*, the performances on this live album have a more persuasive brio, particularly the Western fable "Grey Riders" and the ruralist anthem "Are You Ready For The Country?", driven by Rufus Thibodeaux's rousing cajun fiddle.

8/10

appropriate, too – not quite the one-note marvel of "Cinnamon Girl", but getting there.

On the old Richie Havens staple "High Flyin' Bird", Crazy Horse's resolutely earthbound plod helps cement the aspect from which the protagonist enviously watches the soaring bird, the ground seeming to set around him as he moans, "*Look at me, Lord, I'm rooted like a tree*". "Jesus' Chariot" (aka "She'll Be Comin' Round The Mountain") is another standard subjected to a shadowy makeover, with a tom-tom tattoo and a brooding undertow of chords just like those used to signify the menacing presence of hidden Injuns in old cowboy movies, while Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" is taken dead straight as a community singalong, as befits its standing. As the album's end approaches, "Wayfarin' Stranger" offers an oasis of understated quietude: despite the hushed harmonies and acoustic guitars, it possesses a ghostly, haunted quality that lends depth and anxiety to what used to be a gospel singalong.

Which would have been a perfect place to conclude the album; but with a typical piece of Neil Young perversity, he goes and sticks "God Save The Queen" on the end – and not the Sex Pistols one, either. It's not an appetising prospect, to be honest: the song's fundamental stodginess is redoubled when subjected to the characteristic Crazy Horse trudge, rather like deep-frying a dumpling in batter. Unless there's an unforeseen element of Canuck royalism in Neil – after all, it is Jubilee year, and he probably deserves a gong of some sort – I'm surmising that it's the anthem's rousing assertions of self-determination that attract him. Though it's not quite the anthem of freedom he might like it to be, of course. There's nothing in his version about crushing rebellious Scots, for instance, which is a slight pity. It would have been fun watching him trying to smuggle that past an SECC audience.

GETTY IMAGES; STEFAN DE BATSELIER

the VAULT

JUNE 1997: **Neil Young and Crazy Horse reconvened for *Year Of The Horse*, a Jim Jarmusch documentary and accompanying live album. In *NME*, Neil and Frank "Poncho" Sampedro told JOHN ROBINSON about the band's unique bond**

NEIL YOUNG: We met in Laurel Canyon, on Laurel Canyon Boulevard and I'd just made my first album. We used to get together and play in my living room: the house was a three-storey building on a cliffside, so we're way out on all this redwood, and we're in this room pounding away with our little amps learning "Cinnamon Girl" with the wind blowing through the room. They were good times. The building moved. It felt cool. (*When Danny Whitten died*) we just kept going, you know? It was the first time that anything like that had happened to us as a band, even though the band wasn't together when it happened. Then we just came back together... because of it.

"PONCHO" SAMPEDRO: When I met these guys I was doing a lot of heroin and shit like that and, well, uh, I continued to do it. It wasn't like I joined and then I stopped.

NEIL YOUNG: I don't think I'd have ever gone that way. We all had our excesses that were far too numerous to mention, but we all wanted the same thing: to be in shape to play the show. You can get through it a couple of times but after it gets to be like a style, you just can't sustain the intensity you want with the music. You can get above yourself once or twice and spend the next day on your back, but you can't do it again over and over.

"PONCHO" SAMPEDRO: Playing with Neil's a pretty good gig and I saw there was other stuff I could get into: family and stuff like that. I don't know if I'd have found that path if it hadn't been for the band. I used to have a briefcase and it was full of dope, you know? And now it has some pencils and paper in it. It's like, "Oh right, that's what it's for!"

NEIL YOUNG: We're like a bunch of brothers, always watching out for each other, that kind of thing. But we're not a bunch of brothers who are always that eager to be with each other all the time. I've had worse fights with other bands than with them: we're friends. We've a sense of humour about it, and the more of us there are in one place, the funnier it is.

"PONCHO" SAMPEDRO: For *Zuma*, Neil would just wake up a couple of mornings and say, "Well, I got words all over the bed here – I think I wrote a song!"

NEIL YOUNG: If you believe in the songs you're singing, then the song is going to be happening. But if you don't believe in the song you're singing, you're always going to lose. And if you got as many songs as I got, then there's going to be several I don't feel like singing, so I've got to make sure they're weeded out. So I try to look through for the old songs I can get into, that mean something to me, and that keeps it real, because the song to me is really the key to the whole deal.

> *"I try to look for the old songs I can get into, that mean something to me, because the song to me is really the key to the whole deal"*

"PONCHO" SAMPEDRO: Right now we're older and more separated but we know each other so well we don't have to be together all the time. But between 1975 and 1982 we were together a lot of the time. Underneath, we were punks. That approach to music, to really get to the point and express it raw and in your face: that's us, so I think we fitted in really well (*at the time of Rust Never Sleeps*). We were punks who just looked like hippies.

DEXYS

One Day I'm Going To Soar

BMG RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Even the longest journeys can end up taking you full circle, *says Garry Mulholland*

9/10

BACK IN 1980, when Kevin Rowland was just 27, he interrupted his first album to recite a poem. It was backed by a lone saxophone and you couldn't quite tell whether this was utter pretension or a piss-take of beat poetry; another clue to the bumpy artistic road Rowland was set to travel. The poem was called "Love Part One" and, in a quietly defiant tone, it asked love outside for a scrap. *"Am I the first to question you exist?"* he sneered at his shadowy nemesis, before saying he vomits at the thought that *"she gives herself only for you."* Thirty-two years and several broken relationships, bad career moves, addictions, depressions and public fuck-ups later and... nothing has happened to really change Kevin Rowland's mind about love. He ends only his sixth album, not with an angry poem, but a calm, resigned monologue that breaks occasionally into a beautiful crooned chorus. *"It's not the end of the world,"* sighs Kevin on the stunning "It's OK John Joe", *"...but I think that I'm meant to be alone."* And, after the weight of the life-story he has sung out loud and clear over the previous 11 songs, it feels like a release and a relief, for Rowland, for the listener. You might even cry.

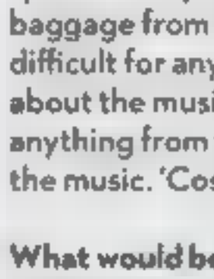
One Day I'm Going To Soar is an album about manhood in all its predatory, childish glory. It's

TRACKLIST

1 Now
2 Lost
3 Me
4 She Got A Wiggle
5 You
6 I'm Thinking Of You
7 I'm Always Going To Love You
8 Incapable Of Love
9 Nowhere Is Home
10 Free
11 It's OK John Joe

Q&A

Kevin Rowland



Can you remember the moment you thought the LP might finally get made?
Once I met Mick Talbot I thought this feels right. I was wearing '40s stuff and Mick's very influenced by '40s films in what he wears. He's an encyclopedia. He can tell you about a scene on a rooftop and a certain kind of sweatshirt and whether the sleeves were rolled up or not. So his look isn't the same as mine, but it was drawing on the same influences. I felt that was an omen in a way.

Both Mick and Pete left Dexys to form The Bureau in 1980. Were you still cordial after the split?
Oh yeah. They both played with us in 2003 on those shows, and I think it was good. I can't speak for anyone else, but I think all of us have baggage from those days. I think it would be difficult for anyone not to have some. But it is about the music, and my job is to get past anything from the past, really. And focus on the music. 'Cos it works.

What would be success for this album?
I tell you what I'd like... to be appreciated at the time. Rather than rediscovered years later.

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

A to Z

p68 CHRIS ROBINSON
p70 GIANT GIANT SAND
p71 THE FLAMING LIPS
p73 HAWKWIND
p75 BOBBY WOMACK
p77 IAN McNABB
p78 PATTI SMITH
p81 BEACHWOOD SPARKS
p85 THE WALKMEN

ADMIRAL FALLOW
Tree Bursts In Snow
NETTWERK

8/10

Scottish folk rockers go widescreen
Admiral Fallow specialise in slow-building anthems that fall midway between Arcade Fire-style orchestral rock and lathered-up nu-folk in the manner of Mumford & Sons. Working with producer Paul Savage (Franz Ferdinand, Teenage Fanclub), the Glasgow-based five-piece brings an elevated sense of drama and dynamics to "Tree Bursts", which shifts from muted to ecstatic in a heartbeat, the Elbow-like cinematic opus "Old Fools" and the rousing secular hymn "Isn't This World Enough??", on an album as heartfelt as it is musically and thematically ambitious.

BUD SCOPPA

ALLO DARLIN'
Europe
FORTUNA POP

7/10

C86 3.0: twee will rock you
The indie gene has proved remarkably resilient, with modern hipsters Veronica Falls, Best Coast and the Vivian Girls rocking that librarian look all the way to the style blogs. Anglo-Australian four-piece Allo Darlin', meanwhile, carry the torch for '80s marvels Dolly Mixture, with ukulele-playing singer Elizabeth Morris – who also backs former Heavenly frontwoman Amelia Fletcher in the Tender Trap – striking a similar note of Doc-Marten-booted vulnerability on their second album, with their lovelorn Go-Betweens tribute "Tallulah" guaranteed to break bowl-cutted hearts. Infectious stuff, and 30 years on from the first Pastels single, there is still no escaping indie's fey power.

JIM WIRTH

DEAN CHALKLEY

also, of course, an album about Kevin Rowland and his enduring anti-love affair with an amorphous beast called Dexys Midnight Runners, now Dexys for short, who may always feature completely different members, but without whom he can't make good records, as 1988's bland *The Wanderer* and 1999's bizarre covers album *My Beauty* readily attest. So one can't help but hear *One Day...* as a belated sequel to the great lost Dexys masterpiece, 1985's *Don't Stand Me Down*, particularly because the music is based on the exact same fusion of sources – Van Morrison, Irish airs, the soul and MOR pop of the late '60s and early '70s – and because it revolves around the same lyrical themes – Irishness, Englishness, childhood reminiscence, lust, paranoia, betrayal and whether an inability to settle into a committed relationship is necessarily the same thing as an inability to love.

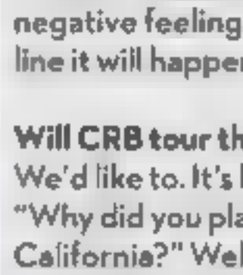
A musical memoir in three acts, *One Day...* kicks off with "Now", and ballad reminiscences about his parents' hard-knock Irish upbringing, there's the fractured boy's search for roots and identity in "Lost" and the music-business horror story that is "Me". It enters a triumphantly funny-'cos-it's-true, five-song gender war middle section, reaching both a peak of comic genius and the tale's tipping-point when, on "I'm Always Going To Love You", Kev suddenly decides that actually he won't at all, provoking co-vocalist Madeleine Hyland into comic howls of exasperation. It ends with three final poignant epics where Rowland attempts to reconcile his desperation for freedom with his guilt-ridden fear of isolation. How an album that includes the spoken lines, (again from "It's OK John Joe"), *"I'm ugly and tired and jaded inside... I can't last much longer like this"*, can possibly leave you feeling energised and optimistic is entirely down to the melodies and how they're played and recorded. Bassist Pete Williams and co-producers Mick Talbot and Pete Schweir have crafted a slick-yet-spontaneous and deliciously soulful sound that often does for Willie Mitchell and Al Green's Hi Records sound what Winehouse and Ronson did for Motown and Spector on *Back To Black*.

One Day I'm Going To Soar pulls off a rare trick: warts-and-all confession and revelation, devoid of self-pity. And here's the thing: it might be better than *Don't Stand Me Down*. It might just be the best record of this year, and the best of Rowland's career. "Unlikely comeback" does not do this extraordinary album justice.

Produced by: Kevin Rowland, Mick Talbot and Pete Schwier
Recorded at: The Premises, Hackney, East London
Personnel: Kevin Rowland (vocals), Mick Talbot (keyboards), Pete Williams (bass), Big Jim Paterson (trombone), Madeleine Hyland (vocals), Neil Hubbard (guitar), Tim Cansfield (guitar), Ben Trigg (violin, string arrangements), Lucy Morgan (viola), Ralph Simins (drums), Ash Soame (drums), Geoff Dunn (drums), Troy Miller (drums)

Q&A

Chris Robinson



Tour first, record second is very old school...
We purposely set out not to make a record until we'd finished a whole year of touring, which turned out to be 118 shows. Those were the building blocks to our sound and our identity, so in the studio we just set up our road gear and went to it. It was the craziest session I've ever done. The true measure of success after 25 years is getting to a place where it feels like we finally have our own commune. This band and this record feels like that.

Does The Chris Robinson Brotherhood mean an end to the Crowes?
Given a perfect storm I don't ever see not having this band and not doing what we're doing. The Black Crowes are important to me, but it's best not to wake up the bear when it's hibernating. I don't have any weird negative feelings about it. Maybe down the line it will happen.

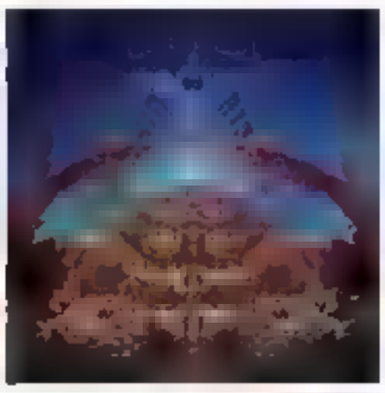
Will CRB tour the UK?
We'd like to. It's hard. People asked us, "Why did you play so many dates in California?" Well, because you can drive around with a pound of weed and not get in trouble. Let's face it, we have priorities as a band.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON

THE CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD

Big Moon Ritual SILVER ARROW/MEGAFORCE

Black Crowe's head music dives deep into the past, *says Graeme Thomson*



8/10

CHRIS ROBINSON'S belief that the occult energy of cosmic rock'n'roll is still capable of shifting the cultural axis has always seemed both heroic and faintly ridiculous. The middle-class suburban kid who put his faith in velvet loons, pre-punk virtuosity and the creative powers of strong weed is a self-confessed throwback, but 22 years after the first Black Crowes LP you'd be hard pressed to question his commitment to the cause. As *Big Moon Ritual* emphatically demonstrates, if you're going to dive into the past, you might as well dive deep.

The opening declaration from the Chris Robinson Brotherhood, who include in their number ex-Cardinal Neal Casal and former Black Crowe Adam MacDougall, *Big Moon Ritual* is unapologetic head music. Formed by Robinson with the sole intention of taking the sound as far up and out as possible, CRB spent all of 2011 relentlessly touring California. Suitably bonded, in January they took their show into the studio, recording 27 songs (some of which will be released in October as a companion album, *The Magic Door*) in six days.

The results are immersive and free-flowing (though not free-form), harking back to rock's logo-free golden age. You can tell that Robinson has lately been performing with Bob Weir and Phil Lesh. The Grateful Dead's expansive Cali-country-rock is a key touchstone (the band even has its own enthusiastic community of live show tapers), as are The Allman Brothers, Gong's lunatic fringe, The Faces and The Stanley Brothers. None of these influences, of course, live far from Robinson's home turf. *Big Moon Ritual* might be loose, but in no sense is it an exercise in absolute abandon: though the heads of these seven songs are in the stars, their boots are planted firmly in the certainties of strong, traditional melody.

Each one feels like a little adventure. Opener "Tulsa Yesterday" flips from an immensely pleasing laidback country shuffle to shimmering space-soul, along the way earning the right ■ every one of its 12 minutes. The terrific "Rosalee" starts with a relentlessly funky clavinet groove – like The Band's "Rag Mama Rag" let off the leash – then rapidly orbits some distant psych galaxy before burning back to earth. Gratuitous? Sure. Fun? Indeed, especially when Robinson's rousing *"air getting thinner, are we getting high?"* refrain slams in, driving the song to its climax.

There's ample sustenance for the heart as well as the head. As emotionally direct as anything Robinson has recorded, "Beware, Oh Take Care" and "Reflections On A Broken Mirror" are big, tender ballads which showcase one of the great rock'n'roll voices in full flood. "Star Or Stone" is similarly affecting, a slow country-blues reminiscent of *Sticky Fingers*-era Stones at their most nakedly soulful. Full of ill portent and dark superstition – *"I was 13th at the table when the wine was passed around"* – it's graced by a particularly elegant, unhurried solo from Casal, who throughout plays a blinder. Co-writer on three songs, his graceful guitar lines bring a silvery lightness ■ music that could easily become dull and heavy.

In the end, only the clumpy, Moog-laced "Tomorrow Blues" remains earthbound, lifting off only momentarily during a dubby space-rock interlude which falls somewhere between The Doors' "Roadhouse Blues" and Hawkwind. The sweet, languid closer "A Hundred Days Of Rain", with its restrained echoes of Neil Young's "Down By The River", makes for a much more thrilling ride, and provides one final stage for Casal's exemplary guitar playing.

For all the length of the songs, *Big Moon Ritual* feels like a mere snapshot of some eternal jam session which might very well still be happening as we speak. The prospect of continued despatches from this corner of the stratosphere is a cheering one, particularly as you suspect future CRB missions will travel even further up and out.

Recorded at: Sunset Sound, Los Angeles, January 2012
Produced by: Thom Monahan
Personnel: Chris Robinson (lead vocals, guitar), Neal Casal (guitar, vocals), Adam MacDougall (keys, vocals), George Sluppick (drums), Mark Dutton (bass, vocals)

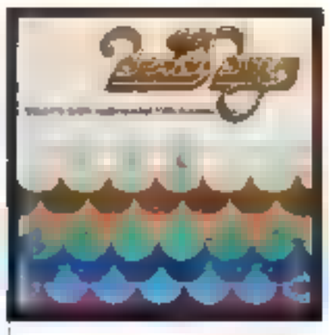
ALO
Sounds Like This
BRUSHFIRE

7/10

Jam-band veterans straddle popcraft and chops on easy-going album

The balmy *Sounds Like This* hints at the mellow vibe of Jack Johnson, ALO's label head and former producer, but the similarities end there. The Santa Barbara-based quartet alternate between laidback mid-tempo tunes that recall Steely Dan circa *Gaucho* ("Cowboys And Chorus Girls", "Combat Zone") and elongated vamps that turn on heady instrumental interaction. The laid-back dance-floor workout "Room For Bloomin'" (9:26) latches springy funk guitar licks onto a chugging Krautrock groove. ALO's personality emanates primarily from the congenial baritone of keyboard player Zach Gill, who sounds like the US equivalent of Elbow's Guy Garvey.

BUD SCOPPA



THE BEACH BOYS
That's Why God Made The Radio
CAPITOL/EMI

5/10

Brian, Mike, Bruce, Al and David Marks (after 49 years away) do it again...

Ruthless schmaltz is, predictably, the order of the day on this first full-length meeting of the Brian Wilson and Mike Love factions since 1996's weird country effort, *Stars And Stripes Volume One*. Love is listed as Executive Producer, while Wilson (Producer) appears keener on Autotuned vocals than one would've expected. The airbrushed nostalgia of the project is less of a surprise – note a wincing reference to "good vibrations" on "Spring Vacation" – and even Wilson's melancholy feels calculated. Nevertheless, recent Wilson solo albums have been no better, and a few melodic passages still dazzle: witness the title track's chorus, kin to Wilson's underrated "Your Imagination" (1998).

JOHN MULVEY

BLUES CONTROL
Valley Tangents
DRAG CITY

7/10

Another blurred crusade from unique American psych duo

Blues Control always felt like the most confusing bedroom psych outfit to spring from America's underground over the past half decade. They have a unique, unadorned take on instrumentation – piano, guitar and tape rhythms – and their songs sit quietly, happy to vibrate internally. *Valley Tangents* takes long, deep breaths, fuzz guitar scrawling over meandering piano in a humidified room. But having said all that, it's hard to hear the flatulent, plastic synth-brass preset on "Iron Pigs" and not be reminded of Europe's "The Final Countdown".

JON DALE

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
Transverse Temporal Gyrus
DOMINO

5/10

Difficult, edited soundtrack to an art installation

Initially released on vinyl for Record Store Day, this LP actually started life two years ago as an art installation. Various guitar riffs, burbling effects and wordless vocals were fed into a computer, and the jumbled results were spat out on a 36-channel surround sound system at New York's Guggenheim Museum. Here, that three-hour session has been edited down to two 14-minute tracks. "Part I" is a pastoral series of disembodied chirrups, guitar strums and soft beats which float around Avey Tare's cooing voice, while "Part II" is rather more electronic and fractured. Interesting in places, but really for completists only.

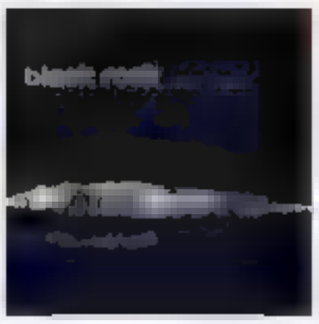
JOHN LEWIS

HOW TO BUY... JOE BONAMASSA
Messin' with the blues-rock formula

Sloe Gin
PROVOGUE, 2009

You can find searing lead guitar solos on any Bonamassa album - and there are plenty here on the likes of "Dirt In My Pocket" and "Another Kind Of Love". But his seventh studio album puts equal emphasis on his nuanced singing and fine acoustic playing, including a brilliant cover of John Martyn's "The Easy Blues", here renamed "Jelly Roll".

8/10



Black Rock
PROVOGUE 2010

If you release as many albums as Bonamassa, you need to ring the changes - and his eighth LP certainly does that. A duet with BB King and covers of Otis Rush and Blind Boy Fuller maintain the hardcore blues quotient. Recorded in Greece, several tracks venture intriguingly into the kind of 'world beat' territory mapped out by Led Zep's "Kashmir".

8/10

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION
Black Country Communion
PROVOGUE, 2010

Bonamassa gets to indulge his obsessions with '60s/'70s British blues-rock by teaming up with Deep Purple's Glenn Hughes, and Jason Bonham. The songs aren't perhaps the greatest, but the heavy-rock swagger is irresistible and the guitar solos are among the most explosive Bonamassa has ever committed to record.

7/10

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

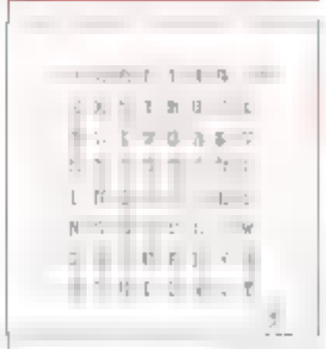
THE BOATS
Ballads Of The Research Department
12K

7/10

Dreamworld post-rock, direct from Leeds

The Boats' blissed-out songs come from good stock – one member, Craig Tattersall, is ex-Hood and Remote Viewer; both Tattersall and colleague Andrew Hargreaves run small-scale labels that document the music of their friends and peers. But their first album for 12K is the most visible flag above the turret yet. These four 'ballads' move slowly, picking up on the hermetic visions of post-rock acts like Bark Psychosis or late-period Talk Talk, fed through a post-glitch sensibility. Which means it's beautiful stuff, gently and generously reeled out from electronics, piano, Durutti Column guitars, strings and guest vocals which stop just short of providing focus.

JON DALE



BASS CLEF
Reeling Skullways
PUNCH DRUNK

7/10

Exquisite techno nostalgia from bearded Bristolian

Ralph Cumbers' last album as Bass Clef was a love-letter to the early-'90s pirate radio sounds of breakbeat hardcore and jungle. *Reeling Skullways*, the title borrowed from the psychedelic science fiction of Brian Aldiss, is a paean to the previous step on techno's evolutionary ladder: the analogue acid sounds of Detroit, Chicago and Manchester. Cumbers coaxes his stubborn machines into weaving a new and highly personal fantasy narrative in which the worlds of dubstep and Detroit techno are connected by a trapdoor on South London's Walworth Road.

SAM RICHARDS

JOE BONAMASSA
Driving Towards The Daylight
PROVOGUE

8/10

The 13th studio album in a dozen years from American blues guitarist

The roots of Bonamassa's blues lie not so much in the Delta as in London's Marquee Club circa '68 when the likes of Free, Fleetwood Mac and Taste were honing a sweatily Brit take on blues-rock. Robert Johnson's "Stones In My Passway" is cranked up as Kossoff and Rodgers might've rendered it. Howlin' Wolf's "Who's Been Talking" slides and shimmers like Peter Green in his pomp. Modern studio sophistication is used to muscle up rather than to gloss, and bluesy reinventions of songs by Tom Waits and Bill Withers lend variety to the material. Best blues album of the year so far.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

AMERICANA

BEST OF THE MONTH

GIANT GIANT SAND
Tucson
FIRE

8/10

More is more from Howe Gelb's revamped band of gypsies

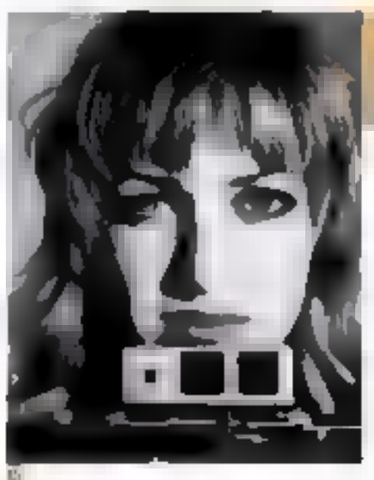
In a gesture entirely in keeping with Giant Sand's unorthodox career, one that stretches back some 30-plus years, leader Howe Gelb marked the end of their recent reissue campaign by changing things completely. To wit he's now doubled both the band's name and its personnel. Enter six new members from Tucson, who, added to the initial half-dozen, mostly from Denmark, have conjured up a very special record that Gelb describes as a "country rock opera", centred around his adopted hometown.

Heading up a group the size of a rugby team might suggest Gelb has attempted some overblown folly. But *Tucson* emphasises the spaces between the notes as much as it does the music itself, as if to make more vivid the desert plains that backdrop the story. The tale involves a grizzled man-boy who dares to dream of a better life, setting off to escape his surroundings only to find every town merely morphs into a similar prison. It's an intriguing plot, as much to do with the idea of borders being psycho-geographical as they are physical.

Some of the songs echo the protagonist's confusion, "Mostly Wrong" and "Plane Of Existence" sounding like busted radio stations of the mind, all odd rhythms and abrupt endings. Pedal steel player Maggie Bjorklund excels throughout, not least on the fragile "Love Comes Over You", which sounds like Cole Porter transposed onto desert scrub. There are some terrific shuffling rhythms too, at their most evocative on the Calexico-ish "Forever And A Day", brightened by fanfares of brass. And special mention goes to Lonna Kelley, whose torchy turn on "Ready Or Not" is a real high spot.

Gelb's masterstroke is the inclusion of Brian Lopez, Gabriel Sullivan and Jon Villa, whose flourishes of Tex-Mex and cumbia accentuate *Tucson*'s feel of pan-cultural enchantment.

ROB HUGHES



THE UNEDGUMBO ROUNDUP

With the festival season edging closer, there's plenty to start hammering the credit card over. The County Showground in Newark, Notts, plays host to the Americana International Festival in the first full weekend of July. Sunday's bill includes such disparate talents as **George Hamilton IV** and **Two Tons Of Steel**, but the big draw for Friday are Los Angeles legends **The Blasters**, led by original member Phil Alvin.

The Cambridge Folk Festival sounds unmissable at the end of July, not least due to a slew of US acts. **Anaïs Mitchell** *(pictured)*, whose *Young Man In America* has been drawing heaps of praise, plays on Sunday, alongside Texan blues singer **Ruthie Foster**, while **John Prine** is the Friday highlight. Look out too for a brief visit from **Alison Krauss & Union Station**, who play Manchester, Liverpool and London's Hyde Park in the middle of the month.

The recent Nashville Film Festival was notable for a couple of screenings from the Americana Music Association. The documentary ***Charlie Louvin: Still Rattlin' The Devil's Cage*** is a celebration of the late country hero with contributions from Marty Stuart, George Jones and Emmylou Harris. While ***Andrew Bird: Fever Year*** captures the mercurial singer-songwriter during the final months of a rigorous US tour, culminating in a show in his hometown of Chicago, by which time he's feverish and hobbling about on crutches.

ROB HUGHES

NENEH CHERRY AND THE THING
The Cherry Thing
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

7/10

'80s pop hitmaker joins forces with Scandinavian free-jazzers

If you know Neneh Cherry chiefly for "Buffalo Stance", her decision to collaborate with Norwegian free jazz trio The Thing might seem rather off-the-wall. But The Thing actually named themselves after a piece by Neneh's stepfather, cornetist Don Cherry, and while typically wild of style, their taste for unorthodox covers makes this a pairing with potential. It doesn't always gel, a version of Suicide's "Dream Baby Dream" feeling rather slight. But a horn-heavy take on The Stooges' "Dirt" is satisfyingly ballsy, and Neneh broods magnificently on Don Cherry's own "Golden Heart".

LOUIS PATTISON

CHICK COREA & GARY BURTON
Hot House
CONCORD JAZZ

7/10

Long-running piano/vibes duo tackle the jazz standards

Since their 1972 ECM album, *Crystal Silence*, these two heavyweights of contemporary jazz have managed to find time every year to duet, tour or record. However, this is the first time that they've moved away from playing their own material and turned to the standards songbook. Burton's glassy lead lines and Corea's jerky modalism lend an unusual air to classics by Tadd Dameron, Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans; two Jobim songs are turned into rippling classical explorations; "Eleanor Rigby" into a mathematical equation. The wildcard is the album's only original, Corea's "Mozart Goes Dancing", an elegant, pulsating tango.

JOHN LEWIS

RODNEY CROWELL
Kin: Songs by Mary Karr and Rodney Crowell
VANGUARD

6/10

Houston kid meets writer in star-studded concept disc

Further delving into by-now familiar themes – growing up in Gulf-Coast Texas circa 1960s, dysfunctional-bordering-on-sociopathic family issues – Rodney Crowell here drafts in best-selling author Mary Karr as co-writer on a set of low-key country/folk vignettes revolving around meaning and madness within family life. Guests including Lucinda Williams, Kris Kristofferson, Emmylou Harris and Rosanne Cash add to the parochial flavour. It's a consistent Crowell effort, if a bit by-the-numbers: "I'm A Mess", seemingly ripped from the Nick Lowe songbook, and "Momma's On A Roll", with Lee Ann Womack, though, are top-shelf.

LUKE TORN

DIIV
Oshin
CAPTURED TRACKS

8/10

Effervescent jangle-poppers make their debut

Nostalgists who are prone to looking back, misty-eyed, to the glory era of '80s indie would do well to turn an ear to the New York label Captured Tracks, whose roster – including the likes of Beach Fossils, Wild Nothing and Craft Spells – is of increasingly dynastic proportions. DIIV is the new project of one Zachary Cole Smith, who has previously played in a touring version of Beach Fossils, and *Oshin* has something of that band's autumnal jangle. Led by a chiming, Byrds-y guitar line, "How Long Have You Known?" is breezy like air-conditioning, but on "Earthboy" and the swoonworthy "Past Lives", Smith's heartfelt songs take on a more melancholic hue.

LOUIS PATTISON

THE FLAMING LIPS
The Flaming Lips And Heady Fwends
WARNER BROS/ LOVELY SORTS OF DEATH

8/10

Wayne Coyne teams up with the world and his wife

Even if you didn't manage to snaffle one of the 10,000 double-vinyl copies of this on Record Store Day, these 13 collaborations will soon get a digital release. Neon Indian contribute to a would-be threnody entitled "Is David Bowie Dying?", while other guests on the Lips' eclectic speed dial include Lightning Bolt, Bon Iver and New Fumes, who all seem to be channelling the Dame. There's shouty motorik (Ke$ha and Biz Markie's "2012"; Yoko Ono's "Do It!") and dreamy ballads (Erykah Badu's ethereal "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face"), while slots from Jim James and Nick Cave fulfil our desire for distorted guitar riffage. A terrific package.

JOHN LEWIS

FLATS
Better Living
SWEAT SHOP/ONE LITTLE INDIAN

6/10

London punks' bruising debut

Angry upstarts Flats were hot property two years ago, attracting the likes of Kevin Shields and Jason Pierce to their earliest shows and landing a Morrissey tour support at his master's request, but an authentic attraction to the seamier side of life rather derailed their momentum. Where once they sounded like Crass and directed their bile at mods ("*Paul Weller's ■ cunt*", ran one ditty), on *Better Living* Flats thrash around moodily peddling sludgy metal while frontman Dan Devine (Alan McGee's estranged son) shouts and sweats. With ■ cover of Hellhammer's "Crucifixion" and a fast one called "Fast", Flats look to be stranded between hipster grunge and true hardcore.

PIERS MARTIN

JIMMY EDGAR
Majenta
HOTFLUSH RECORDINGS

6/10

New York City electro heartthrob can't quite get it up

For a producer with such an erotically charged image, former Warp artist Jimmy Edgar has been firing blanks for far too long. Signs were that he'd got his mojo back after 2010's flaccid *XXX*: the excellent lead single for his first album for voguish beat farm Hotflush, "This One's For The Children", is a No Wave call-to-arms stamped with Edgar's bad-boy credentials, while the album's final number "In Deep" dallies with Art Of Noise's 1985 single "Moments In Love". But for much of *Majenta* he seems content to lie back and think of Prince, smearing gooey pastel funk all over the place.

PIERS MARTIN

EL-P
Cancer For Cure
FAT POSSUM/TURNSTILE

7/10

New York indie rap kingpin still angry at the world

Trends in rap trends come and go, but former Company Flow and Def Jux mastermind El-P is always there, grizzling away in the shadows. "*You're the cancer, you're the fucking problem, you're the pollution!*" he barks on "True Story", while the scintillating "Oh Hail No" proves that the old curmudgeon can still keep pace with ebullient young guests such as Danny Brown. The blaring, bombastic beats bear comparison with the searing sci-fi dubstep of Joker and Starkey, although at times you're left craving some of the eerie minimalism of El-P's classic Cannibal Ox productions.

SAM RICHARDS

REVELATIONS
More celebrity Heady Fwends of The Flaming Lips...

NAME: Justin Timberlake
OCCASION: *Top Of The Pops* appearance, 2003

Justin Timberlake, dressed as a dolphin, playing bass on "Yoshimi..."? How come? Friends with Wayne Coyne through Timberlake's then-girlfriend, actress Alyssa Milano, "Justin came to our dressing room and said he wanted to play bass with us," Coyne told *The Daily Mail*. "When he saw we all had animal costumes, he wanted one, too. So we gave him the dolphin suit, which was really badass."

NAME: Adam Goldberg
OCCASION: *Christmas On Mars* film, 2008

Although rumoured to include an appearance from ex-hobbit Elijah Wood, the Lips' bizarro sci-fi debut in fact found *Dazed & Confused* and *Entourage* actor Adam Goldberg turn up as a Martian psychiatrist. Goldberg also co-wrote the score for his second film as director, *I Love Your Work*, with Lips multi-instrumentalist Steven Drozd.

NAME: Henry Rollins
OCCASION: *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, 2009

The Flaming Lips were approached by iTunes to provide some exclusive tracks for the digital release of 2009's *Embryonic* album. They didn't have any, so instead they covered Floyd's *Dark Side...* in its entirety. Peaches sat in for Clare Torry on "Great Gig In The Sky". Rollins, however, appears on all but two tracks. "He was already in a studio in Los Angeles doing some stuff," Coyne told The AV Club. "He sent one of his assistants out to get *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, because he'd never heard it."

MICHAEL BONNER

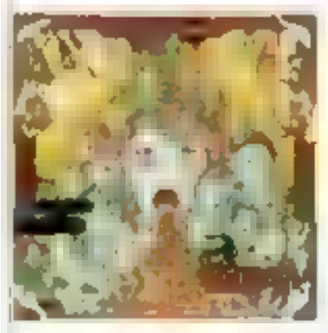
FORSS
Ecclesia
FORSS

5/10

Techno boffin's pioneering methods reap limited rewards

The Swedish electronic musician and SoundCloud founder Eric Wahlforss joined forces with Leo Lass, a Viennese graphic designer, and Marcel Schnabel, a CGI artist from Germany, for this audio-visual album designed to be played with an iPad app. While the visual element is resolutely 21st-Century, the music is rooted in Forss' love of medieval church music, setting recordings of bells, organs and choirs alongside portentous percussion, much of which was created by a real church congregation. Forss' vision is intriguing on paper, but the final product, though atmospheric, isn't quite as exciting, falling somewhere between Dead Can Dance and a run-of-the-mill '90s chill-out compilation.

FIONA STURGES



GAGGLE
From The Mouth Of The Cave
TRANSGRESSIVE RECORDS

7/10

Striking first album from 21-strong female choir

The outrage caused by Lincoln Cathedral Choir's recent decision to break with a 900-year tradition and admit ■ woman suggests that Gaggle's time is now. Not that they wave an overtly feminist flag or are in any way conventional, despite their director's classical training. Debut single "I Hear Flies" underlined the warrior-like potency of massed female voices, but this LP sources R&B-pop, electro, hip-hop, illbient lounge and African hi-life. Muddy production does them few favours, but the likes of "Gaslight" and "Bang On The Drum" position Gaggle in a continuum that runs from The Andrews Sisters to Yoruba Women Choir.

SHARON O'CONNELL

REX FEATURES, GETTY

SOULSAVERS

The Light the Dead See

Collaboration With

DAVE GAHAN

CD / LP + CD / DL

OUT NOW

V2

MELODY GARDOT
The Absence
VERVE

7/10

Globe-trotting third album from American jazzer

Moving away from the traditional jazz and blues textures of 2009's *My One And Only Thrill*, *The Absence* charts a global musical odyssey, taking in the sounds of South America, Lisbon, Paris, New Orleans and Cape Town. Gardot by turns evokes fado diva Mariza ("Lisboa", "Se Voce Me Ama"), Astrud Gilberto ("Mira") and Billie Holiday ("My Heart Won't Have It Any Other Way"), and even dips vibrantly into township jive on "Yemanja". But *The Absence* isn't just an experiment in various styles. The songs are terrific, too: loose, lovely, dramatic things alternating between the brightest sunshine and the deepest midnight blue. Travel clearly suits her.

GRAEME THOMSON

GUIDED BY VOICES
Class Clown Spots A UFO
FIRE

7/10

Second of three 2012 albums by reformed lo-fi pioneers

Back again (again), Bob Pollard and cohorts maintain their productivity rate with a second post-reunion collection, another 21 songs of baffling titles, ingenious melodies and charming amateurism. Harking back to their *Alien Lanes* glory days, the glam stomp of the title track recalls their classic "My Valuable Hunting Knife", while "Hang Up And Try Again" gives Cheap Trick a punk makeover. Pollard adopts a Beefheartian growl for "Blue Babbleships Bay", but the upbeat discipline of "Keep It In Motion" is still suffused in melancholy, and Sprout's gentler, REM-styled approach remains intact on "Forever Until It Breaks".

WYNDHAM WALLACE

HAWKWIND
Onward
EASTWORD RECORDINGS

5/10

27th studio album from hardy space-rocking veterans

While certainly not yet in the territory of the heritage act, drably revisting the highlights of their catalogue, the modern Hawkwind do have the feel of a band living in the shadow of their history. Album standout "Death Trap", a knuckle-headed slab of space-garage, dates back to the '70s, while few could argue that "Computer Cowards", a diatribe against internet trolls dotted with dial-up modem sounds, is the sound of the band at their most vital. They can still attain a fair old velocity, though, and a second CD largely comprised of live material at least works the value-for-money angle.

LOUIS PATTISON

GET CAPE. WEAR CAPE. FLY
Maps
COOKING VINYL

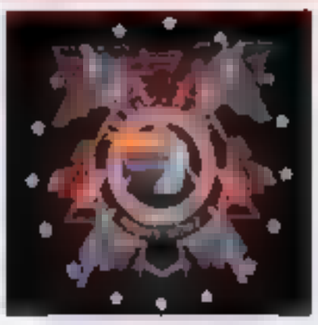
5/10

Get Blur. Hear Blur. Flop

Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly's capricious career has more than once prompted a wish that songwriter Sam Duckworth would concentrate on one of his many ideas for longer than five minutes. On his fourth album under the Get Cape name, Duckworth has finally decided what he wants to be: the trouble is that Blur, circa *Blur*, have already been it. The opening salvo of *Maps* – "The Real McCoy", "Vital Statistics" – is straightforward pastiche. Too much of the rest of the album refuses to admit any influence beyond Damon Albarn (the cover even looks like Jamie Hewlett drew it). Duckworth is better on such wry ballads as "The Joy Of Stress", on which he sounds more like himself.

ANDREW MUELLER

HOW TO BUY HAWKWIND
Three of the space bandits' best



In Search Of Space
LIBERTY/UA, 1971

The band's second album saw Hawkwind mutate from acoustic Ladbroke Groovers into dystopian sci-fi rockers. Whooshing noises, ornate but coherent Barney Bubbles sleeve design, and excellent riffs help key tracks like "Master Of The Universe" transcend the ridiculous.

7/10

The Space Ritual Alive In London And Liverpool
LIBERTY/UA, 1973

Strobes! Naked dancers! The band standing in zodiac-assigned stage positions! In many ways, you had to be there. But double album *The Space Ritual Alive In London And Liverpool* is a magnificent, supremely well-edited live record of Hawkwind's 1972 tour, "Orgone Accumulator" a longform expression of their repetition-based cosmic thinking.

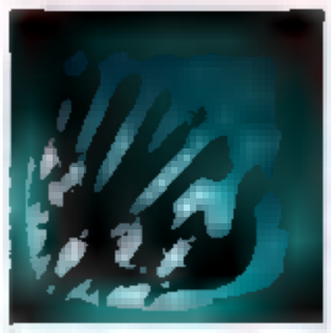
8/10

Levitation
BRONZE, 1980

Hawkwind entered the Thatcher era without lyricist/frontman Robert Calvert but with legendary drummer Ginger Baker and returning original guitarist Huw Lloyd-Langton, whose devastating modal guitar playing instantly sharpened up the band's game.

7/10

JOHN ROBINSON



THE HIVES
Lex Hives
DISQUES HIVES

6/10

The Scandinavian garage-rock blueprint fades...

No-one sensibly looks to The Hives for a parameter-pushing challenge. The Swedish quintet first swaggered into earshot at the turn of the millennium with "Hate To Say I Told You So", a brutally obvious but brilliant blast of retro garage-rock that bagged them a deal with Alan McGee's new Poptones label. Since then, they've worked their high-energy, punched-up hybrid of Iggy Pop, Chuck Berry, Joan Jett and The Glitter Band mercilessly. While there's no denying the attitudinal insistence of "I Want More" and "Patrolling Days", album number five is the sound of the law of diminishing returns finally kicking in.

SHARON O'CONNELL

GIRLYMAN
Supernova
GIRLYMAN INC

7/10

Folky quartet in fine fettle again

Five albums in and 10 years down the line, the Atlanta-based pop folkies are assured as ever when it comes to articulate, harmony-soaked paeans to the heart, although *Supernova* is clearly their most personal collection yet. Singer Doris Muramatsu was diagnosed with leukaemia in late 2010, and while her treatment left a question mark hanging over the band's future it also inspired some of the more emotional songs on the album ("Break Me Slow", "No Matter What I Do"). Themes of uncertainty and transformation litter the record, but the overriding message is one of hope, of positivity. Muramatsu's cancer is now in remission, and *Supernova* emerges as a lively and lyrical celebration of a band reborn.

TERRY STAUNTON

KELLY HOGAN
I Like To Keep Myself In Pain
ANTI-

8/10

Longtime back-up singer steps into the spotlight

On her first album since 2001, surrounded by a superbly understated studio band featuring soul legends Booker T Jones and James Gadson, Hogan explores the nuances of songs written for her by talented friends like Robyn Hitchcock (the title track), Vic Chesnutt ("Ways Of This World") and Jon Langford ("Haunted"). The real standouts are "Daddy's Little Girl", in which M Ward puts her inside the head of Frank Sinatra, and the Jack Pendarvis-Andrew Bird collaboration "We Can't Have Nice Things", which places Hogan's honeysuckle voice at the intersection of country, soul and '60s pop, where this gifted song interpreter resides.

BUD SCOPPA

New Albums

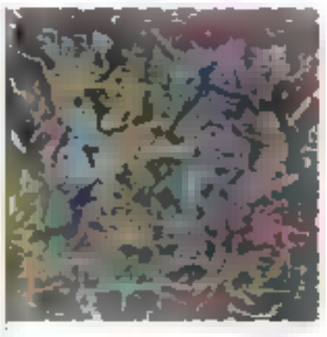
JESCA HOOP
The House That Jack Built
JESCA HOOP CURUJA/ BELLA UNION

8/10

Hard-hitting folk-pop from Waits-endorsed songstress

Famed for babysitting Tom Waits' children, Jesca Hoop cements her current occupation with an impressive third album suffused with grief after the death of her father. From "Pack Animal" – *"don't wanna be here all by myself in this strange house"* – to the title track in which the singer visits her dad's home and sorts through his belongings, Hoop articulates her isolation with poetic eloquence. Her despondency is balanced with levity elsewhere, most enjoyably in "Hospital", in which a child longs to break a bone for the kudos that having a plaster cast will bring at school.

FIONA STURGES



IT HUGS BACK
Laughing Party
4AD

7/10

Dreampop-inspired schoolmates improve on their faceless debut

Whether It Hugs Back frontman Matthew Simms picked up some tips during his year as touring guitarist with Wire or not, *Laughing Party* is more convincing than their 2009 debut. Still inspired by shoegaze and dreampop, any hint of their former facelessness is blown away by "The Big E", a pummeling, 15-minute Kraut odyssey that opens the album. Reminiscent of Built To Spill at their most agitated, it's an exhilarating ride sprinkled with multi-layered guitars and iridescent electronics. The rest of the album never reaches such heights, but there are enough noisy high-points, such as "Never Get Tired" and "Sit Tight", to make *Laughing Party* a significant step up.

TOM PINNOCK

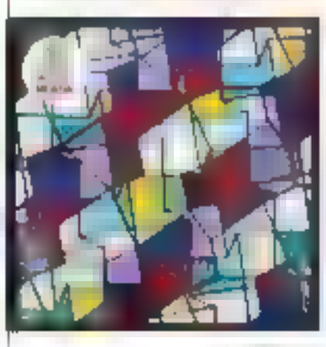
JAPANDROIDS
Celebration Rock
POLYVINYL RECORDS

7/10

Pummelling powerpop duo from Vancouver

This Canadian two-piece manage to defy their depleted numbers to produce belligerent, loud but surprisingly catchy powerpop with a pleasingly punkish tinge. Second track "Fire's Highways" is a cracker, with punchy drums, churning guitar and a swooping, defiant chorus, while "Evil's Sway" is a wonderful piece of heavy rock, oozing youthful energy, as guitarist Brian King and drummer David Prowse bellow the chorus in unison above a tornado of fuzz and thump. At times all this vim can slip into noise – "Adrenaline Nightshift" is a bit of a mess – but on the magnificent "For The Love Of Ivy" and the controlled fireworks of "Continuous Thunder" it produces pounding blues of the most exhilarating kind.

PETER WATTS



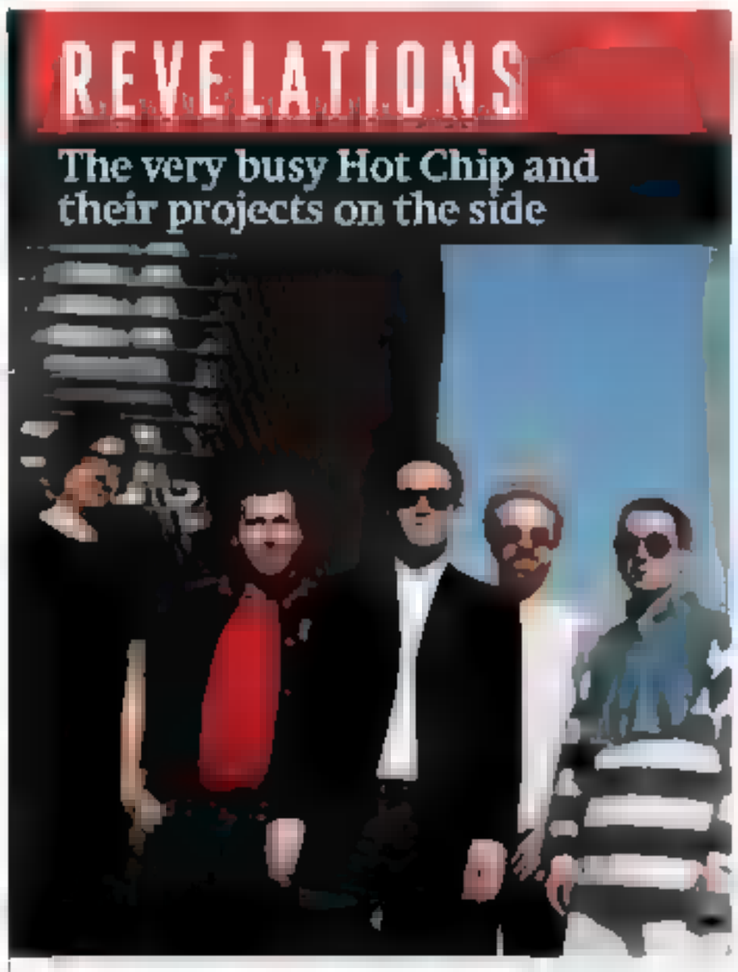
HOT CHIP
In Our Heads
DOMINO

8/10

Industrious London posse pump up the jams

Like anxious freelancers taking on as much work as possible, the arrival of Hot Chip's fifth album overlaps campaigns for their notable side-projects, 2 Bears and New Build. All these creative avenues ultimately lead to *In Our Heads*, the group's first post-EMI batch of awkward slow jams and funky synth-pop through which courses a generous, mischievous urgency perhaps missing from the Chip's last album, 2010's *One Life Stand*. With this one weighted heavily towards the dancefloor, there's no shortage of sublime moments when the likes of "Let Me Be Him" and "Flutes" unravel.

PIERS MARTIN



In Our Heads finds Hot Chip back on tremendous form, but though the band has been conspicuous by its absence these past 18 months, the various members, not known for their idleness, have used their spare time prudently. Pint-sized singer Alexis Taylor formed two funk outfits, About Group and Bang & Olufson, while Al Doyle and Felix Martin teamed up with Tom Hopkins for New Build, whose excellent *Yesterday Was Lived And Lost* reimagined The Doobie Brothers as ravers.

Joe Goddard, meanwhile, scored a Top 30 album earlier this year with The 2 Bears' retro-house debut *Be Strong* and then in March was surprised to learn he'd notched up his first No 1 – in South Africa. The Rainbow Nation embaced Goddard's soulful solo cut "Gabriel". "It started getting played on South African radio," says Goddard. "I think house music is big there at the moment and for some reason people got into it."

Goddard admits The 2 Bears, his bromance with Raf Rundell, is already bigger than he thought it would be, but Hot Chip has always been his priority. "They're friends I've been making music with for 15 years. I've got close ties with all those guys."

PIERS MARTIN

SEU JORGE
Musicas Para Churrasco Vol. 1
WRASSE

7/10

Brazil's superdude fires up the barbecue

Perhaps it's juggling acting and music that's made Jorge's album output so unpredictable. Here he follows the rambling psych-rock of *Cru* (and the wilder fusions of *America Brasil* (not forgetting the poop-deck Bowie of *Life Aquatic*) with a party album, *Music For Barbecues*, allegedly the first of a trilogy about suburban life. Most of its 37 minutes are steeped in '70s funk – George Clinton in the case of "Ole Ole". Still, samba flavours are never far away – check the lilting "Amiga Da Minha Mulher" ("My Wife's Friend"), one of several studies in male lust that deserve (but don't get) translation.

NEIL SPENCER

I SEE HAWKS IN L.A.
New Kind Of Lonely
BLUE ROSE

7/10

Californian psych-country-rockers go all-acoustic

After four albums of psychedelia-tinged alt.country/roots rock, singing guitarist Bob Waller and band pull up the rocking chairs on the porch for an all-acoustic set. They earn marks before playing a note for a song called "I Fell In Love With The Grateful Dead", but it's a key signifier. The spirit owes something to *Workingman's Dead/ American Beauty* era, but even more to the spontaneity of the Dead's 1981 live acoustic set *Reckoning*, Waller's rich baritone and some smart, sharp and decidedly dark lyrics providing the cherry on the Garcia.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

STEVE GULLICK/GETTY

B.B. KING
Live At The Royal Albert Hall 2011
UNIVERSAL

6/10

(Surely) Last hurrah from 85-year-old blues royalty

King was already playing guitar when Robert Johnson died and, as the last link with the sharecropping roots of the blues, he can be forgiven if he sits down onstage these days. But what was surely his farewell British concert proved his playing still walks tall, as crisp solos are rolled out on career landmarks such as "The Thrill Is Gone" and "Rock Me Baby". He can still sing expressively, too. But the real joy is simply to bask in the warm presence of a great showman one last time, the meandering, senior storytelling as much a part of the deal as the playing.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

BOBBY WOMACK

The Bravest Man In The Universe

XL

Heroic comeback album from soul giant. *By Neil Spencer*

7/10

DAMON ALBARN CERTAINLY makes things happen. Having lured Bobby Womack from semi-retirement to add his soulful rasp to the Gorillaz' "Stylo" (and persuading him to tour with the group), Albarn then fired up the singer and XL's Richard Russell to make an album, Womack's first offering in 14 years.

The results are startling, setting Womack's distinctive voice against stark electro backings and thunderous beats. A few wisps of synthetic strings and a couple of gospel stomps evoke Womack in his prime years in the '70s and early '80s, when albums like *Communication*, *Across 110th Street* and *The Poet* were among the finest (and most successful) creations to emerge from black America, yet *The Bravest Man In The Universe* unmistakeably belongs to the 21st Century – 21st-Century London at that.

There is surprisingly little of Womack's guitar playing in evidence – odd, given the prowess that made him a sought-after session player in his early years, when he helped Janis Joplin, Aretha Franklin and Sly Stone among others. Instead comes Albarn's piano – minimal, even spectral at times – plus samples, synths and beats, plus somewhere in the background is Womack's longtime co-writer Harold Payne.

It's tempting to draw analogies with Russell's resurrection of another soul veteran, Gil Scott-Heron, on *I'm New Here*, but the downbeat feel of Heron's album is in contrast to the emotional outbursts of *The Bravest Man*.... Most often it's anguish and regret that are its driving force. "Please Forgive My Heart" finds Womack in the grip of a pain that *"won't let up – it feels like the sky is falling"*. He delivers a terrific heartfelt vocal, and though the melodic background coda hints at resolution, the song offers no way out of the pain.

A sense of stoical endurance is the trademark of the album, whose opening line *"The bravest man in the universe is he who has forgiven birth"* seems to acknowledge that, in the Buddha's words, 'all life is suffering' (due to human imperfection). "Sweet Baby Mine" offers more heartache, as Womack tortures himself with the question that haunts all forlorn lovers – *"What happened to those good times?"* – amid a swirling, echoing production.

"If There Wasn't Something There" is another contemplative piece – a scrap really, not much more than the title phrase – but set to a taut, edgy rhythm, it works well. The title of "Nothing Can Save Ya" tells its own story, with Womack's wracked, distorted performance offset by the warm, melodic vocals of Fatoumata Diawara as his answering 'ex'. There's another female guest, Lana Del Rey, on "Dayglo Reflection", which includes a somewhat superfluous quote from Womack's original mentor, Sam Cooke, about becoming a better singer over time. Again, Womack's bluesy approach – *"waiting for the day to bring me life"* – is set against Del Rey's dreamy, haunting vocals. Less successful is "Stupid", which opens with a droll observation on TV evangelism from Scott-Heron before Womack rails against the media *"poisoning your mind"*.

The upful stuff arrives in the shape of a couple of re-animated gospel pieces. "Deep River", with Womack accompanying himself on acoustic guitar, is an antique spiritual that he would have sung as a boy in church in Cleveland, and again with his brothers in The Valentinos when they were signed to Sam Cooke's label (Cooke himself sang the number). Now, at 68, when Womack delivers the line *"You know I ain't got that much longer to stay here"* it has a more pressing and affecting meaning. "Jubilee (Don't Let Nobody Turn You Round)" is another song whose origins reach back into black American history – there are numerous versions, including one by Blind Willie McTell). Here Womack and co take the gospel message at speed, set to a hammering synthetic rhythm. Musically it's not altogether convincing, although as the closing two minutes to an often harrowing album, it works well enough, a defiant shout against the suffering, and a reminder that, as Albarn says, "A world with Bobby Womack in it is a richer place."

Q&A

Bobby Womack

It must feel good to be back...?
I'd given up on music to be honest, I thought I didn't have the necessary spark any longer. I'd lost my confidence. I credit Damon for giving it back to me and believing in me. When he first called me I'd never heard of any Gorillaz group! It was my daughter who told me they were cool and that working with them could be a way back.

This is a very different Bobby Womack album.
I just needed the chance to experiment. It's daring, I hadn't used so many electronics before, but the voice is still what carries the spirit. I made a lot of albums in my career when I was pleasing record companies instead of myself. I had to fight like hell to make a country album for example (*BW Goes C And W*), but these were some of the easiest sessions I've ever done.

Even though the head of the record company was in the studio?
I thought Richard (Russell) was a musician, I couldn't believe it when they told me he was the president of the company! He understands sound, though, and we became a tight team.

And a painful record at times?
OK. It's just about telling the truth, really.

INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER

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LED ER EST
The Diver
SACRED BONES

8/10

Gothic synth freeze from New York three-piece

Along with The Soft Moon and Xeno & Oaklander, Led Er Est are part of a largely Stateside movement to reinvestigate the febrile electronic post-punk sounds of the early 1980s – the so-called "cold wave", who flourished in an era of budget analogue technology, but were swept away in the digital music revolution. Their billowing synths have a filmic quality, albeit more Tarkovsky's *Stalker* than any blockbuster material. But the songs themselves are exquisite: see "Divided Parallel", a whirl of ticking rhythms and spiky guitar that resembles *Pornography*-era Cure retooled along simmering synthetic lines.

LOUIS PATTISON

MAXÏMO PARK
The National Health
V2

7/10

Business as usual for buzzy Wearsiders

Although operating on a somewhat more expansive scale, Maxïmo Park's fourth album rarely strays far from the sounds underpinning their previous records. Intense yet inclusive, the jittery rhythmic push and buzzing guitars frame Paul Smith's passionate tales of social unease (the title track is a furious state-of-the-nation address) and romantic bumps ("Reluctant Love", "Until The Earth Would Open"), punctuated by fleeting euphoria on the truly uplifting "The Undercurrents". The occasional sense of a well-worn formula being diligently followed is counter-balanced by the committed performances and a sufficiency of hooks.

GRAEME THOMSON

JOHN MAYER
Born And Raised
COLUMBIA

7/10

Pop star/guitar hero relocates his mojo in soft rock's past

Mayer clearly signals his intentions on the opening track of *Born And Raised*, name-checking *Harvest* and Joni Mitchell in "Queen Of California", while gracing the song's Laurel Canyon lilt with his own high, lonesome harmonies. The Don Was-produced album proceeds at an unhurried pace, featuring Jackson Browne-like confessionals ("Shadow Days") and Young-style, harmonica-accented shuffles (the title song), much of it graced by the sublimely evocative tones of SoCal pedal-steel master Greg Leisz. A couplet in the bittersweet "Speak For Me" italicises this deft exercise in musical nostalgia: *"You can tell that something isn't right/When all your heroes are in black-and-white."*

BUD SCOPPA

LIARS
WIXIW
MUTE

7/10

Electronic-tinged sixth from art-punk Brooklynites

To describe any given new Liars album as 'a new direction' would be to fundamentally miss the point, this trio powered by a artistic wanderlust that has seen them seize on post-punk, witches, The Jesus And Mary Chain, and the underbelly of Los Angeles as creative starting points. Their sixth, made in a cabin in rural California with assistance from Mute's Daniel Miller, toys extensively with synthetic textures, "Octagon" and "His And Mine Sensations" swathing eerie drum bounce and Angus Andrew's slurred chants in bright electronics. Hit singles are in short supply, but *WIXIW* has an atmospheric, immersive quality that puts one in mind of *Kid A*'s soporific drift.

LOUIS PATTISON

REVELATIONS

Ian McNabb on how Crazy Horse made him "the coolest guy in the UK"

➤ "My label had a bit of money and suggested I go to LA to work with some other people," recalls Ian McNabb *(pictured above, centre foreground, with Ralph and Billy from Crazy Horse)* of linking up with his heroes on 1994's Mercury-shortlisted *Head Like A Rock*. "I wasn't keen, so I said I'd only do it if I could play with Crazy Horse, not expecting for a second it would ever happen. Within a day I got a call saying they were up for it, because they had nothing else to do. They'd been rehearsing songs with Neil Young for *Mirrorball*, and were pissed off when he went and recorded ■ with Pearl Jam instead."

Drummer Ralph Molina and bassist Billy Talbot ultimately played on four tracks of McNabb's album, including its epic centrepiece "You Must Be Prepared To Dream", but decided to stick around. "The real shocker was when they asked if they could come over and play live with me at Glastonbury. Suddenly I was the coolest guy in the UK; we did a warm-up in London where Noel Gallagher jammed with us, Mike Scott joined us at Glasto, and loads of others tried to muscle in on it because Ralph and Billy are legends. And they're on my record!"

TERRY STAUNTON

IAN McNABB
Little Episodes
FAIRFIELD

8/10

A festive quickie without forsaking quality

Most of us probably spent Christmas and New Year carousing, but a disciplined McNabb took himself off to a studio and recorded his new album over an intensive 10-day period. The speedy approach reaps rewards, resulting in a more cohesive and accessible collection than 2009's *Great Things*. For the most part double-tracking himself on acoustic guitars and vocals, McNabb indulges his folk-pop side, "A Heart That You Can Borrow" and "Only Children" covered in the fingerprints of Crosby, Stills & Nash, while the fuller group sound of "Ancient Energy" and "To Love And Let Go" recalls the pristine melodic rock of his Icicle Works roots.

TERRY STAUNTON

DENT MAY
Do Things
PAW TRACKS

6/10

Modern-day doo-wopper, now minus his "Magnificent Ukulele"

Resembling a nerdier version of *Happy Days*' Richie Cunningham, Dent May looks far too square to be part of Animal Collective's Paw Tracks posse. But just like his clean-living role model Jonathan Richman, it's his incorruptibility that makes him interesting. May's wholesome barbershop harmonies, in full effect on "Rent Money" and the wonderfully droll "Parents", give him the edge over your average bedsit troubadour. However, he may come to rue the day he traded in his trusty ukulele for a cheapo drum machine that makes his attempts at pop-funk sound more gauche than his nifty songcraft deserves.

SAM RICHARDS

RHETT MILLER
The Dreamer
MAXIMUM SUNSHINE

6/10

Fifth solo outing for erstwhile Old 97's man; Rosanne Cash guests

Spare and (mostly) downbeat, diverting sharply from the taut rock'n'roll marking the last couple of Old 97's efforts, *The Dreamer* is Miller in (lightweight) Texas troubadour mode, spinning out wistful, heart-on-sleeve vignettes – tuneful melancholia specked with backporch harmonies and steel guitar. Simple singsong melodies reign – the gentle, winsome swing of the title track and the choppy two-step rhythms of the sly "Long Long Long" especially stand out – but Miller can't help occasional returns to his powerpop protocol. The surging, vaguely Squeeze-like chorus of "Out Of Love" takes the LP's trademark self-pity to a new extreme: *"I'm only happy when I'm singing a sad, sad song."*

LUKE TORN

PATTI SMITH

Banga

COLUMBIA

Sweet music, heavy issues on first collection of original material since 2004. *By Stephen Troussé*

8/10

"PATTI SMITH WAS the president of a fan club that had just one member," wrote Luc Sante earlier this year, reminiscing about the artist's nascent early '70s notoriety, "but a hundred idols." Now in her sixties, releasing her 11th studio album, this habit of passionate devotion clearly hasn't deserted her. Reporting from the *Banga* launch party, *Uncut*'s Michael Bonner told of how, while chatting to Patti, he quickly became aware of the "symmetries, references and associations that resonate through the album – among them, the lives and achievements of artists, explorers, A-list film stars, emperors and saints". And so you won't be surprised to find that the cast of *Banga* quite naturally includes Amerigo Vespucci, Amy Winehouse, Maria Schneider, Johnny Depp, Nikolai Gogol, Andrei Tarkovsky, Sun Ra, St Francis of Assisi and Neil Young. Not to mention Pontius Pilate's dog.

But the star of the show is quite obviously Patti Lee Smith. Talking on a CBS breakfast chat show ahead of the release of "April Fool" she talked of how, when she first saw Jim Morrison as a teenager, her gut reaction, beyond rapture, bliss or lust was a mysterious, premonitory "Yeah, I could do that." It's this casual chutzpah, the determination of the beanpole South Jersey schoolgirl to take the stage, carry the torch, quite naturally, undeferentially consider poets, painters and matinee idols, not just icons but conversational peers, that is still the most punk thing about her.

The title track, and finest moment on the album, is a classic example of Smith's radical democracy of reference. The song is named after Pontius Pilate's dog as depicted in Bulgakov's *The Master And Margarita* (the novel that inspired "Sympathy For The Devil" as well as sundry lesser tracks by Pearl Jam and Franz Ferdinand). Smith finds in Banga a symbol of enduring faith, a dog who stayed loyal and loving to its notorious master through his long torment following the crucifixion. In a stroke of absurd genius she chooses to marry this tale to a pounding revamp of The Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog", and somehow alchemically transforms it from the anthem of scuzz-rock self-abasement into something heroically long-suffering and even noble.

The trials of keeping the faith might be the key theme to the record. The album opens with "Amerigo", a stately, string-swathed song told from the perspective of the first European voyagers to America. Commanded to baptise the heathens, they are instead impressed by the lovely liberty of the native Americans: *"such a delight to watch them dance, free of sacrifice or romance"*. It closes with a simple, plaintive take on "After The Gold Rush", Neil Young's *Silent-Running*-style dream of elect spaceships fleeing the wasteland of the earth. With help from a schoolkid choir, Smith updates the coda to *"look at Mother Nature on the run in the 21st Century"*.

The betrayed promise of America and the despoiled Eden of the New World hang heavy over the album, and on many songs Smith casts herself as some oracle in reverse, attempting to justify the ways of man to God. Funnily enough, this doesn't stop it from being in many ways the sweetest album she's ever recorded: "April Fool" is heavy with references to Gogol, but is rendered as light as a spring breeze by a shimmering, serpentine solo courtesy of longtime associate Tom Verlaine. "This Is The Girl", the elegy for her fellow disciple of Ronnie Spector, Amy Winehouse, is a twinkling piece of '50s Lynch-pop drenched in blood and wine, making literal Brian Wilson's ambition of composing "teenage symphonies to God".

By contrast the more ambitious numbers don't always come off: "Tarkovsky" is an endearingly mad attempt to splice her poem "The Boy, The Beast And The Butterfly" to a riff from Sun Ra's "The Second Stop Is Jupiter" which doesn't quite fulfill its promise, while "Constantine's Dream" is a dense meditation on the competing vocations of art and faith, via the lives of Francis of Assisi, Emperor Constantine, painter Piero della Francesca and Christopher Columbus that feels a little academic. These songs are too studious, feel too much the product of Smith's evident scholarship, rather than her radical wildness. At her best, and across much of *Banga*, Patti Smith still dramatises the distance between South Jersey and the San Francesco basilica, the street tussle between the poet and the factory girl, the devotion of the mongrels of faith for the betrayers of salvation.

Recorded at: Electric Lady, NYC
Produced by: Patti Smith and her band: Tony Shanahan, Jay Dee Daugherty and Lenny Kaye
Personnel also include: Tom Verlaine, Jack Petruzzelli, Johnny Depp, and Smith's son Jackson and daughter Jesse Paris

MOTORPSYCHO & STALE STORLØKKEN

The Death Defying Unicorn

RUNE GRAMMOFON

7/10

Nordic, nautical concept double-album

This CD lives up to its subtitle, 'A Fanciful And Fairly Far-Out Musical Fable' through sheer tentacular outreach. Supersilent keyboardist Ståle Storløkken and the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra are among the crew press-ganged into accompanying the Motorpsycho trio on this oceanic sequence of songs and instrumental passages. "Through The Veil" thrashes like a harpooned plesiosaur over its 16 minutes, dropping to a becalmed lull in "Doldrums", encircled by gentle zephyrs of bass clarinet. Tacking from the prog bombast of "Mutiny!" to the electroacoustic improv of "Sculls In Limbo", this epic trip confirms Motorpsycho as Norway's own Grateful Dead.

ROB YOUNG

O CHILDREN

Apnea

DEADLY PEOPLE

7/10

Spacey London alt.rockers, fronted by a six-foot-four Nigerian goth

There have been plenty of gutteral voices in rock'n'roll, but none get anywhere near as deep as O Children's frontman, Tobi O'Kandi. It's a voice that negotiated Depeche Mode-ish synth-pop on O Children's 2010 debut (also explored here on "Red Like Fire" and "H8 City"). But the more successful tracks here hit a heavier gothic rock intensity, like the slide-guitar-driven "Oceanside". The album was apparently recorded while O'Kandi was in a state of deep depression – he spent around two years fighting deportation to Nigeria – although "Yours For You" is a wonderfully uplifting counterpoint to this.

JOHN LEWIS

OFF!

OFF!

VICE

7/10

Los Angeles punks don't take it easy in middle age

In hardcore, it's not about what you do so much as the speed at which you do it. OFF! (the generally superb old-bloke US punk band fronted by one-time Black Flag vocalist Keith Morris) take that as a credo here, offering 16 songs in as many minutes. They show their old pro status in their barbed wit (as in "Cracked": "*Are you kidding, we were playing too fast/Are you smoking pot or is your head up your ass?*") and in the way they make these brief statements like "Wiped Out" and "Jet Black Girls" filled with variation, their combination of riff and sneering recalling at times the strut of *Raw Power* Stooges.

JOHN ROBINSON

MOULETTES

The Bear's Revenge

BALLING THE JACK

6/10

Prog-folk virtuosity run riot

The second album from progressive folk mini-orchestra Moulettes opens impressively with "Sing Unto Me", a typically stirring blend of fiddles, cellos, lissom female harmonies and agile tempo changes that could easily be a rediscovered song from the soundtrack of *The Wicker Man*. Theirs is a myriad mix of gypsy swing, boisterous folk, waltzes, jigs, polkas and classical eclecticism, but it's one which eventually becomes too much of an attack on the senses. Moulettes' feverish professionalism relies overmuch on a safety in numbers and an incessant ingenuity that on record, if not onstage, becomes wearisome.

MICK HOUGHTON

WE'RE NEW HERE

Peaking Lights

Call your latest record *Lucifer*, as Wisconsin's husband-and-wife dream-dub duo Peaking Lights have, and unusual events are bound to happen. "I saw Kenneth Anger grocery shopping the other day in East Hollywood," says Aaron Coyes, the Lights' laidback synth guru and former film student. "I mean, he basically invented MTV with films like *Lucifer Rising*. He's a really old dude now. Think he was buying yoghurt and salad."

Lucifer **– "You know, the 'bringer of light' thing" – is the third album of hazy incantations by Coyes and his spouse, drummer and singer Indra Dunis, and follows last year's blissed-out breakthrough *936*, so named because Coyes liked the way the numbers looked together. "Outside Pink Floyd, dub is probably one of the earliest forms of psychedelic music I heard," says Coyes. "I love the rhythm."**

Fixtures on the US underground's cassette scene – Dunis was in synth-rock trio Numbers, music nut Coyes drifted between various acts – the couple formed Peaking Lights in 2008 as a way to pay for petrol on a long drive down to Texas. Now hooked up with Domino offshoot Weird World and touring with one-year-old son Mikko, theirs is a journey that's just getting started.

PIERS MARTIN

PEAKING LIGHTS

Lucifer

WEIRD WORLD

6/10

More languid psychedelia from Bobby Gillespie's favourite new band

Lucifer is the swift follow-up to last year's acclaimed debut *936* from husband-and-wife duo Aaron Coyes and Indra Dunis – perhaps too swift, since this is a rather slight album that fails to build on promising foundations. It's less outwardly trippy and more gently beatific than *936*, possibly reflecting a change in circumstances – the family's new arrival, Mikko, is hymned extensively on "Beatiful Son" and his delighted gurgles form part of "LO HI"'s ambient glaze. It's all very becalming, but not quite the nu-psychedelic staging post that we were hoping for.

SAM RICHARDS

MATT NATHANSON

Modern Love

VANGUARD

7/10

Telly tune go-to guy's first album for five years

Nathanson's last album, 2007's *Some Mad Hope*, was much beloved by television producers. All but one of its 12 tracks was licensed to the soundtracks of ratings-grabbers like *Scrubs*, *One Tree Hill* and *Private Practice*, and the mellow, uncomplicated pop grooves of *Modern Love* seem destined to a similar money-spinning fate. These are solidly structured ditties with few surprises, in a user-friendly orbit between Jack Johnson and Ben Folds. There's a little more college rock venom to "Mercy" and "Queen Of Knots", though the whole may be a little too safe and MOR for some ears.

TERRY STAUNTON

DAVID BLACK

POND

Beard, Wives, Denim

MODULAR RECORDINGS

8/10

Tame Impala sidemen kick up a stink of their own

Featuring two members of Tame Impala's touring band, it's fair to say that if you enjoyed the halcyon psych-rock of *Innerspeaker* then you'll enjoy this. Pond are rowdier and less rapt than their Perth compadres, a boisterous collective of up to 10 members who recorded *Beard, Wives, Denim* during a fortnight of high-jinks in an old farmhouse. Inevitably there's a fair amount of cosmic fannying involved, but this is framed by some cracking songwriting and impressive attempts to assimilate The Pretty Things' *SF Sorrow*, The Flaming Lips' *The Soft Bulletin* and The Mighty Boosh's "Sea Funk".

SAM RICHARDS

New Albums

THE POND
The Pond
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

6/10

Surprising reinvention from one-time acoustic troubadour

You'd never guess that beneath the trip-hop waters of The Pond lurks Liverpool-born folkie Kathryn Williams. Teaming up with long-time collaborator Simon Edwards (Fairground Attraction) and Ginny Clee (The Dear Janes), her acoustic leanings have been ditched in favour of a moody, downtempo sound, full of eerie loops and electro-bleeping. The most obvious reference point is Beth Gibbons' folk-tinged 2002 album, *Out Of Season*, although she and Williams don't so much meet in the middle as wave in recognition as they journey down the same route in opposite directions. The logic becomes clearer when you realise the album was mixed by Portishead's Adrian Utley.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

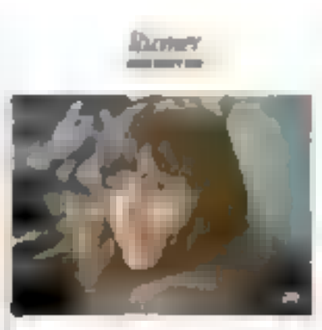
RUBY MUSE
Red Guitar In A Blue Room
LIQUID AIR

6/10

Acoustic folk-pop coupling take it up a notch

Based around husband and wife Jools and Malcolm Heyes, with a handful of guest players, Ruby Muse's second album introduces richer textures to their sound than on their 2006 debut. The largely acoustic folk-pop template is still in place, but with more adventurous detours into country ("Can't Figure You") and jazz ("Mr Horizon"), the latter giving Jools a chance to try out a few Rickie Lee Jones swoops and phrasing. There's an occasional tendency towards lyrical heavy-handedness, such as the wordy tribute to Vermeer, "The Painter", but the deft hopping between styles keeps things interesting.

TERRY STAUNTON



RUMER
Boys Don't Cry
ATLANTIC

7/10

Superlative voice meets great '70s songwriters

It's a smart move for Rumer to follow her hugely successful 2010 debut *Seasons Of My Soul* by covering songs from the 1970s written by, among others, Jimmy Webb, Townes Van Zandt and Clifford T Ward. The enduring values of those writers and that decade perfectly complement her luxuriant voice and smoothly retro style, which drapes a lush melancholy over everything from "A Man Needs A Maid" and "Soulsville" to the sumptuous "P.F. Sloan" and achingly intimate "Soul Rebel". Despite the odd longueurs, *Boys Don't Cry* is a heartfelt, beguiling match of singer and song.

GRAEME THOMSON

THE PRE NEW
Music For People Who Hate Themselves
PRE WAR BLACK GHETTO

7/10

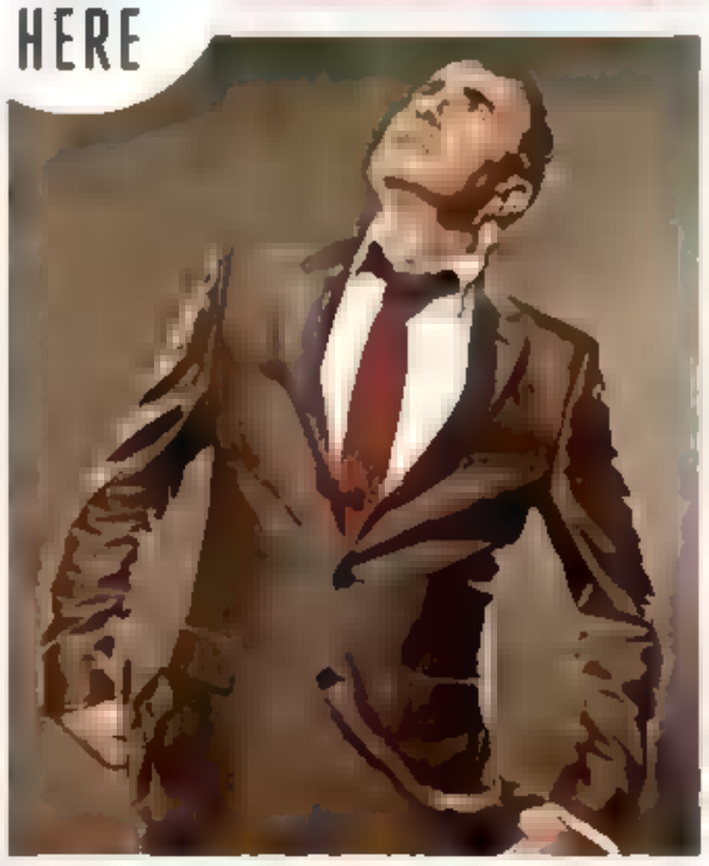
It was all the 1970s round here, once. Fiftysomething state-of-nation address

Part social satirists, part grumpy old men who don't understand, The Pre New (essentially Earl Brutus, reformed after the death of Nick Sanderson) operate on a magnificent knife-edge. Musically, glam rock and The Fall are important reference points, while singer Jim Fry pinpoints the band's position, angrily adrift on a sea of jargon ("*SMS me*," he declaims on "Do You Like My New Hair?", "*MRI me*"). Unlikely as it may seem, however, amid their fuming ■ credit-funded dream home lifestyles, the band are capable of great beauty, using lovely synth melodies on their utopian electro lullaby "In The Perfect Place".

JOHN ROBINSON

WE'RE NEW HERE

The Pre New



"There's a grumpy old man element to what we do," confesses frontman Jim Fry, "just not in a horrible, Martin Clunes kind of way."

A band formed after the untimely end of Earl Brutus, The Pre New perform witty post-glam rock by (and possibly chiefly for) men of a certain age. It is alive with Reevesian good humour, pertinent social commentary and a love of glam rock and electronic music. Fry is of an age where he gets inspiration from his own record collection – and also from his son's.

Formed a while after the death of Brutus man Nick Sanderson in 2008, The Pre New gather old hands like Stuart Borman, Gordon King and Shinya Hayishida alongside new guys Laurence Bray and Stuart Weldon. They are, says Fry, eager to be themselves: that's to say, people who are old enough to say that the modern world hasn't turned out quite as well as they expected, but also old enough to remember seeing the Sex Pistols. It's complaining with a strangely joyous edge.

"And I can promise that after we're massively successful," Fry concludes, "we absolutely will not make an album about how hard it is to be a rock star."

JOHN ROBINSON

SAINT SAVIOUR
Union
SURFACE AREA

6/10

Classy dreampop debut from Groove Armada chanteuse

Stockton's Becky Jones went to music school and lives in Shoreditch. But don't let that put you off entirely, because her first self-produced album is thankfully free of hipster irony. Inhabiting a similar, electronica-meets-classical sound world as Bat For Lashes and Gazelle Twin, Union eschews the coffee-table dance of former employers Groove Armada and goes for melodrama, frosty atmospherics and striking soprano vocals. Though subject matter ranges from eco-fear to Dickensian prostitutes, it all sounds like love and romance, especially when unleashing the Fleetwood Mac-isms on the likes of "This Ain't No Hymn". Overwrought in places, but accomplished.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

PRODUCERS
Made In Basing Street
THE LAST LABEL

5/10

Producer supergroup relive the excessive 1980s

Named after the old Island studios (now Sarm) where it was recorded, *Made In Basing Street* teams Lol Creme and Trevor Horn with guitarist/engineer Stephen Lipson and drummer Ash Soan to relive the golden age of the Big Studio Sound. Polished, slick and overwhelmingly redolent of the excessive '80s, the defaults are Los Angeles soft rock ("Freeway") and fussy ballads ("Your Life"). Contrasting the dated and downright schlocky "Man On The Moon" with the simple, Ron Sexsmith-esque "Barking Up The Right Tree" proves emphatically that less can be more.

GRAEME THOMSON

SANSA
Savior
KOOLMUSIK

6/10

Third outing for Finnish pop chanteuse

Scandinavian clichés about angst apply all too easily to Helsinki's Sansa, whose vocals mostly come set to chilly backdrops of echoing synths and slurred beats. On "Gone To My Head" she's leading the trip-hop revival and on "Rainbow Child" revisiting teen years listening to the Eurythmics. At best, though, her vocals carry melody and passion – "Black Brick Wall" will surely show up on a movie soundtrack soon, and she delivers Sabrina's Eurodisco hit, "Boys Summertime Love", as a fetching piece of yearning, autumnal pop. Elsewhere, on "Know Too Well", Sansa plays folky songwriter and gets rocky on the title track, covering too many bases.

NEIL SPENCER

BEACHWOOD SPARKS

The Tarnished Gold SUB POP

Zen and the art of twang: LA's cosmic psych cowboys return after decade-long hiatus. *By Luke Torn*

7/10

PICKING UP NEARLY where they left off in their early-2000s prime, Los Angeles' Beachwood Sparks' reunion renews their kaleidoscopic, Californian approach to country-rock – a good-natured, soul-searching wash of sound in which vibe is everything. *The Tarnished Gold*, mature, with a revelatory appreciation for the simple life, might prove to be the true spiritual heir to their auspicious 2000 debut: winsome Zen-like roots/rock bursting from the heart with rich, ebullient harmonies, and atmospheric smears of steel guitar amid gentle, sun-baked melodies. In their original 1997-2002 run, Beachwood Sparks were a band out of time. Too late for much notice by the No Depression generation, but appearing well in advance of the waves of Fleet Foxes and Bon Ivers, their timing was questionable. Yet in their unassuming way, they were perhaps the most convincing descendants yet in a lineage of classic LA country-rockers, starting with The Byrds, and winding through the Flying Burritos, The Long Ryders, Minneapolis transports The Jayhawks, and Sparklehorse – though with an Elephant 6 twist: a raw sense of wonder in their voices (and the heavenly harmonies), and a fascinatingly trippy bit of noise-rock and psychedelic experimentation in their sound.

All four Sparks principals – including main songwriters Chris Guntz and Brent Rademaker – plus guitarist and frequent Ryan Adams collaborator Neal Casal, are on board for the rebirth, recorded essentially live in the studio. From the ease-in of the opener, "Forget The Song", softly burnished vocals enveloped in electric-guitar curlicues and ethereal steel, the group pulls off their particular and peculiar world-unto-itself, floating-dream ambience.

While the self-explanatory "Sparks Fly Again", a relatively rambunctious tribute-to-themselves replete with exhortative Beach Boys-style backing vocals – *"Tampa to LA on a West Coast flight!"* sings Farmer Dave Scher with a radiance worthy of Chuck Berry on "Promised Land" – kicks up some dust (especially given its shimmering *Notorious Byrd Brothers* guitar break), most of *The Tarnished Gold* inhabits those groggy moments between dreamland and wakefulness – gauzy, pensive mindtrips atop simple folk structures, lyrics zeroing in on love and loneliness, dead-ends and simple acceptance, basic human existence. "Water From The Well" is a case in point: with its gentle, stair-step guitar and rolling-river melody – rustic contemplations on freedom and nature – it's a salve, soul music for complicated times. "Nature's Light" and "Leave That Light On", sister songs both, follow suit, sprawling, expansive pieces, hushed voices merging with gentle cascades of fingerpicked guitar.

Not everything works to perfection: "No Queremos Oro", a mariachi-style tribute to Gunst's LA roots, ambitious and warmly executed, simply doesn't fit in; Rademaker's downhome "Talk About Lonesome" is surely the album's catchiest, most straightahead number, exuding pure Nashville-style songcraft, with harmonica accents and a sing-songy chorus. But it doesn't play to the band's strengths, its lack of depth rendering it (admittedly, over many listens) as a kind of throwaway.

"Earl Jean", showing off their innate pop sense, though, might be *The Tarnished Gold*'s most impressive cut. Buried toward disc's end, it's a love song, its laidback seesaw melody ushering listeners into their own personal daydream, before pin-prick guitar leads explode into an open-hearted vocal. *"Don't feel so strange/ As there could be at any moment a change,"* goes one lyric, reminiscent of Dillard & Clark's "Out On The Side".

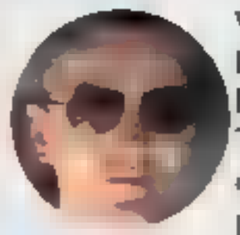
Other highlights abound: "The Orange Grass Special", echoes of Johnny Cash and Carter Family Americana, is a nice detour; brief closer "Goodbye", verging on lullaby, wraps things up as pure dreamscape. Still, *The Tarnished Gold*'s gorgeous title track is its centrepiece – musically and philosophically – and definitive Beachwood Sparks: with Gunst's vocal cradling its evergreen melody like a newborn baby amid tender harmonies and sunrays of steel guitar, it's part love song, part elegy to the mysteries of life: *"Funny how when you find what you're looking for/It was already there."*

Produced, engineered and mixed by: Thom Monahan at Kingsize Sound Labs & The Ship – Eagle Rock, California
Mastered by: Christian Wright at Abbey Road
Personnel: Chris Gunst (guitar, vocals), Brent Rademaker (bass, vocals), Farmer Dave Scher (guitar, melodica, keys, vocals), Aaron Sperske (drums, vocals), Ben Knight (guitar, vocals), Neal Casal (guitar), Dan Horne (steel guitar). Also feat. Jen Cohen, Jimi Hey, Darren Rademaker, Ariel Pink, Thom Monahan, Blake Mills

JIM GOODWICH

Q&A

Chris Gunst



What is it about Byrds/ Burritos country-rock that holds such sway?
The connection to The Byrds, etc, became more of a talking point for the press rather than how we felt, and it pigeon-holed us a bit. Obviously the sound of some of those records was influential, but so was... Felt, Ride, Spiritualized, Joy Division. But how do you wrap that craziness up in a soundbite?

How would you characterise it then?
I don't think it was a desire to live in the '70s or something. The style was influential as well as enjoyment of the aesthetic. It's in our collective conscious as a band, and a place where we meet. When we are together, this is the music we make. The band seems to take on a meta-identity of its own.

What does 'Cosmic American Music' mean to you?
When I hear that, I have attachments to certain bands, such as Byrds, Burritos, Beach Boys... but I also have a literal understanding: America, the openness of the landscape, connection to the land, mixing of cultures, new traditions, reinvention, alchemy. *INTERVIEW: LUKE TORN*

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked

FOGHAT

Fool For The City/Nightshift

EDSEL

7/10

Brit boogie merchants, big in America

Formed from the ashes of Savoy Brown in 1971, soon relocating to America, Foghat may just be the most successful British group to chalk up a string of gold and platinum discs in the US without ever troubling even the lowest rung of the charts in their homeland. Signed to Bearsville, the label started by Bob Dylan's manager Albert Grossman, they mined the same blues-rock seam as Jo Jo Gunne and Grand Funk Railroad.

A cover of Willie Dixon's "I Just Want To Make Love To You", produced by Dave Edmunds, was an early radio play favourite as the band built a considerable live following, but frontman/guitarist 'Lonesome' Dave Peverett emerged as a writer of savvy, hard-rocking originals, their two biggest hits being the evergreen "Slow Ride" (still a movie soundtrack staple) and the title track of 1975's *Fool For The City*, their best-selling long player. The following year's *Nightshift* kept the power chord grooves coming, including a sleazy take on Al Green's "Take Me To The River".

This twofer is one of six reissues bringing together 13 albums, and represents the clear pinnacle of their career, dispensing with the digressing jams of earlier records and without the paunchiness of what was to follow. The towering "I'll Be Standing By" and the anthemic "Drivin' Wheel", both from *Nightshift*, remain highlights, the latter providing a crunchy template for more metal-minded Brits Def Leppard and Saxon.

A downturn in commercial fortunes led to a split, with Peverett moving back to the UK in 1984, only to return to America in 1990 to form his own rival version of the band, Lonesome Dave's Foghat. Uberfan Rick Rubin persuaded the various founders to bury the hatchet and regroup three years later. Peverett succumbed to cancer in 2000, but a lineup still tours under the name today, with drummer Roger Earl the only original member, their no-nonsense rock and blues finding great favour on the US nostalgia circuit.

TERRY STAUNTON

"Blues and rock fuck righteously enough to call for nuptials..."

LESTER BANGS

JOE STEVENS

SANTANA

Shape Shifter

STARFAITH RECORDS

4/10

Something for the faithful

It's no surprise that Carlos Santana's 36th album adopts the same tastefully refined formula the guitarist has followed since *Supernatural* initiated such a spectacular comeback in 1999. *Shape Shifter* features mostly stockpiled instrumental pieces characteristically driven by Latin jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms. It's sustained by Santana's instantly recognisable guitar work, given a grand orchestral setting on Touré Kunda's "Dom". Santana retraces his past with "Mr Szabo", paying homage to jazz guitarist Gabor Szabo whose music he highlighted on *Abraxas*, while "Angelica Faith" opens with a teasing reprise of the classic "Samba Pa Ti".

MICK HOUGHTON

BENJAMIN SCHOOS

China Man Vs China Girl

FREAKSVILLE

5/10

'The new Gainsbourg'? Not quite...

Running your own record company affords a label owner the opportunity to indulge their whims very publically. So it is with Benjamin Schoos, head of Freaksville, who shuttles between Paris and Brussels producing artists and writing and recording his very own Francophile pop constructions. 'Construction' feels like the right word – these songs are very conscious exercises. While that kind of rifling through pop's wardrobes can lead to great music (Saint Etienne, Stereolab – whose Laetitia Sadier guests on the strongest song here, "Je Ne Vois Que Vous"), Schoos' new record is a little too light on substance. A few nice moments, but nothing to thrill.

JON DALE

SIGUR RÓS

Valtari

EMI/XL

8/10

Icelandic elementalists drift deep on long-gestated sixth album

This bewitching record has a long tail, with some sessions stretching back to a 2003 collaboration with London's 16 Choir. A decade and much further, fragmented recording later, those origins remain clear on the devotional "Dauðalogn" and three long closing choral pieces. Although the vast orchestral ballad "Varúð" ends with what sounds like the earth shattering, these eight tracks are rooted in stillness, retreating from the rigid song structures of 2008's *Með suð í eyrum við spilum endalaust* towards something closer to *( )* and Jonsi's recent Riceboy Sleeps project in their open, unhurried magnificence.

GRAEME THOMSON

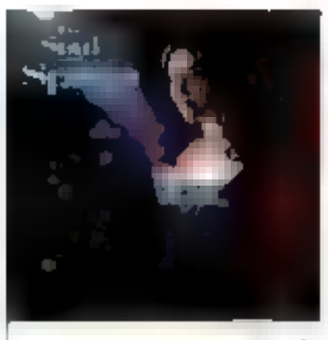
SLUGABED
Time Team
NINJATUNE

7/10

Mind-melting jazz-tronica from Somerset squelch-step novice

Young Bath native Gregory Feldwick's previous releases tended towards squelchy instrumental hip-hop slathered in vintage videogame effects, but this kaleidoscopic debut speaks of grander musical horizons stretching across the electronic spectrum and beyond. Tracks like "New Worlds" and "All This Time" evoke the lysergic jazztronica of Flying Lotus, while "Grandma Paints Nice" and "Climbing A Tree" inevitably suggest the Aphex Twin. There's ample subversive humour here, sandwiched between soggy excursions into easy-listening jazz-funk. All the same, Feldwick is clearly a livewire talent adept at mashing up everything from vintage Sega samples to the arthouse end of dubstep.

STEPHEN DALTON



SPAIN
The Soul Of Spain
GLITTERHOUSE

8/10

Los Angeles slowcore pioneers return in style

Josh Haden is sometimes referred to as a jazz musician, perhaps because his dad is Charlie Haden, but his best-known song is the scarcely jazzy "Spiritual", as covered by Johnny Cash, Soulsavers and Midnight Choir. On fourth album *The Soul Of Spain* – their first in a decade – Haden's band Spain deliver a suite of elegant, weary songs in which the measured pace masks the emotional intensity. "Hang Your Head Down Low" has a hint of, um, Low, and "Without A Sound" bleeds atmosphere. Haden even delivers a song called "I Love You", and manages to make it sound both vulnerable and fresh.

ALASTAIR McKAY

JULIA STONE
By The Horns
PICTURE SHOW RECORDS

7/10

Understated, dreamy second album by Aussie chanteuse

Two songs in, Julia Stone's second solo album starts to make sense. There's a waft of electronica, a click of percussion, and Stone sings: *"Stand up straight at the foot of your love/ I lift my shirt up."* This is The National's "Bloodbuzz Ohio", gorgeously rendered as jazzy pop. Stone's self-penned songs are less insistent, but producer Thomas Bartlett enlists the likes of Rob Moose (Antony & The Johnsons) and Brett Devendorf (The National) to add sharp edges to the Australian singer's dreaminess. The optimistic "Justine" is a highpoint.

ALASTAIR McKAY

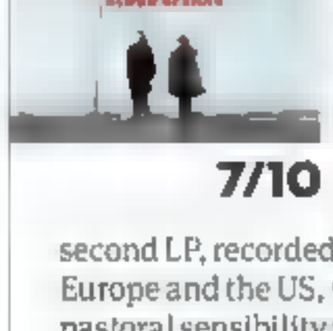
SMOKE FAIRIES
Blood Speaks
V2

7/10

Full-bodied second LP from the Jack White-endorsed folk duo

There's a pleasing robustness to Jessica Davies and Katherine Blamire's second LP, recorded in between lengthy tours of Europe and the US, which combines an English pastoral sensibility with the sound of '70s folk-rock. While there are still glimpses of the ethereal waftiness displayed on their 2010 debut, elsewhere they have added a much-needed dose of grit. Thus "Awake" brings to mind Feist without the yelps and hollers while "The Three Of Us", with its cranked-up guitars, somehow bridges the gap between Fairport and Echobelly. Emboldened by their experiences of pastures new, you get less of a sense of young maidens skipping round the maypole than two battle-scarred musicians adapting to life on the road.

FIONA STURGES



SONS OF NOEL AND ADRIAN
Knots
BROKEN SOUND/WILLKOMMEN/ ONE INCH BADGE

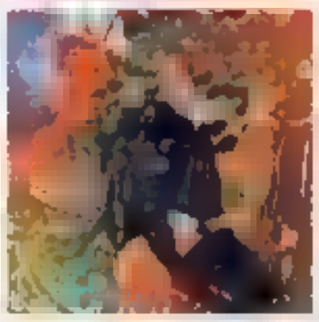
6/10

Brighton folk supergroup's solid second album

The cascading guitars of opening track "The Yard" give the impression that Sons Of Noel And Adrian's second album is not too far removed from their acoustic-laden debut, but while there is still plenty of finger-picking, there's also more in the way of innovation. "Come Run Fun Stella Baby Mother Of The World" combines acoustic guitar, soul beats, drone and military drumming in a way that recalls early TV On The Radio, while "Cathy Come Home" and the trumpet-heavy stunner "Matthew" brilliantly mix gentle acoustic with drone, creating storms that build in power until eventually blowing themselves out.

PETER WATTS

HOW TO BUY SANTANA
Triple peaks: the Latin rock legend on CD



Abraxas
SONY, 1970

Released on the back of a thrilling Woodstock appearance, Santana's second album defined the band's sound. Years of over-familiarity have still not dulled the perfection of the record's mix of psych ("Singing Winds Crying Beasts"), blues ("Black Magic Woman") and salsa ("Oye Como Va"), all tied together by the fluid guitar of one of rock's great stylists.

10/10

CARLOS SANTANA & JOHN McLAUGHLIN
Love Devotion Surrender
SONY, 1973

Its white-suited new age mysticism was much misunderstood at the time. In retrospect, tracks such as their version of Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and the 16-minute "Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord" sound radical and transcendent. Those who accuse Santana of insufficient risk-taking in his long career should start here.

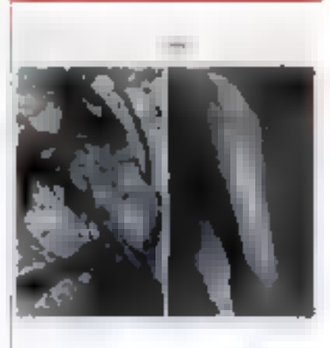
9/10

Supernatural
SONY, 1999

Arguably there are better Santana albums in his back catalogue – but you can't ignore the record that rejuvenated his career. Never mind the nine Grammies. It was a joy to hear him so reinvigorated by a cast of younger collaborators, including Eagle-Eye Cherry, Lauryn Hill, Everlast and Cee Lo.

8/10

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



SUSANNA
Wild Dog
RUNE GRAMMOFON

8/10

Originals only on the Norwegian songbird's splendid latest

Brilliantly unexpected and exquisitely executed though her takes on "Jailbreak", "Crazy Crazy Nights" et al were, Susanna Wallumrød risked overdosing her audience on covers. Now, after one album of reinventions with her Magical Orchestra and one solo, the singer-songwriter/pianist delivers another set of originals. The timbre of Susanna's sublime voice guarantees a forlorn vulnerability, but beneath the jazz-folk-toned melancholia there's a new dramatic intensity. With a band that features Bonnie "Prince" Billy's sometime guitarist Emmett Kelly, Susanna flirts with cosmic pop in "Rolling On Rolling Stone", while the sensual "Wild Horse Wild Dog" sees her marrying Kate Bush with Sondheim and Slint.

SHARON O'CONNELL

TAFFY
Caramel Sunset
CLUB AC30

6/10

Tokyo quartet launch their very own Britpop revival

Taffy's debut recalls the 'glory days' when Echobelly and Sleeper were (almost) household names. If it's disconcerting to realise there are Japanese teenagers fetishising Camden Town circa 1994 as the high tide of musical history, Taffy revive its spirit with zestful charm. They would have worked perfectly as one of those faceless post-Creation bands Alan McGee signed to Poptones, at a time when Britpop was already on life-support. But weirdly, songs such as "Canary" and "Indetermination" sound considerably more appealing than their antecedents ever did at the time.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

New Albums

THE TALLEST MAN ON EARTH

There's No Leaving Now

DEAD OCEANS

7/10

Absorbing, eloquent country folk

Swedish singer-songwriter Kristian Matsson has upped his skill factors on this, his third full-length and the follow-up to 2010's acclaimed *The Wild Hunt*. Even his trademark, abrasive vocals are warmer this time around, closer to John Prine than the oft-referenced Dylan. He's also adopted a richer, more textured country sound on much of the record; "Bright Lanterns" is a particular delight, soaked in haunting steel guitars. Yet Matsson still strips it back at times, switching to a delicately pounded piano for the affecting title track and a simple melodic guitar for the soul-searching "On Every Page".

MICK HOUGHTON

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

Everybody's Talkin'

SONY MASTERWORKS

8/10

2CD live set captures virtuosic young band in its element

On *Revelator*, the much-praised 2011 debut album from the big band led by singer/guitarist Susan Tedeschi and her husband, slide guitarist Derek Trucks, came off like an amalgam of the Allman Brothers Band, and Delaney & Bonnie & Friends. This more captivating follow-up, mixing originals and inspired covers, fuses sultry blues and deep jazz with Trucks' training in Indian classical music to create an alchemical hybrid. He distills the recipe to its essence in the intro to "Midnight In Harlem", but Tedeschi is no second fiddle, singing soulfully throughout, and delivering an ecstatically primal vocal on Bobby Bland's "That Did It".

BUD SCOPPA

SIDI TOURE

Koima

THRILL JOCKEY

7/10

Desert blues magic from virtuoso Malian singer-guitarist

The late Ali Farka Touré's influence imbues the music of Sidi Touré, no relation but from the same Songhai region and tradition, and culturally steeped in the maestro's guitar style. *Sahel Folk*, Sidi's 2011 Thrill Jockey debut, was a pared down, intimate one-take field recording. The follow-up, recorded in a fully equipped studio with backing band, retains an acoustic ethic, but is more richly textured. Touré's smooth, resonant voice is buttressed by haunting call-and-response female backing vocals, while single-string fiddle (soku) and calabash percussion weave ancient rhythmic spells over the insistent patterns of his guitar.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE TEMPER TRAP

The Temper Trap

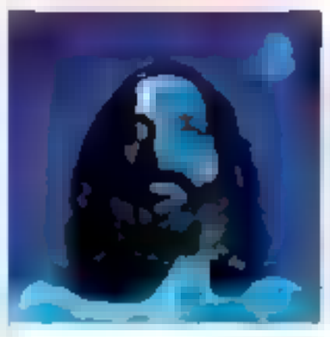
INFECTIOUS MUSIC

4/10

Bombastic Aussie indie rockers (with added London riots)

When David Cameron emerged from a COBRA discussion about the 2011 riots, and announced "this is criminality pure and simple", he could not have foreseen that his words would be sampled by a Melbourne rock band. Even the PM, one suspects, would cringe at the accompanying lyric – "*Who's the world to blame, when the children go insane, dancing on their broken dreams?*" That song, "London's Burning", is the most striking thing here, though the falsetto vocals on "Miracle" are almost worthy of Bronski Beat, and the synth-heavy chorus of "Dreams" exudes cloying commerciality in a 1980s style. Not quite criminal, but close.

ALASTAIR McKAY



SEBASTIEN TELLIER

My God Is Blue

RECORD MAKERS

8/10

The 21st-Century Gainsbourg gets spiritual

Hairy and hulking Parisian singer/composer Tellier has been worryingly silent since his misguided Eurovision foray in 2008. Whether hiding in shame or just waiting until his fans had forgotten, it's been four years well spent, because *My God Is Blue* is his best album yet. Inspired by quasi-religious 'blue visions', this 12-track epic blends the lush orchestral romance of his globally popular "La Ritournelle" with the boudoir electro of 2008's *Sexuality* album and even steps gingerly on to the dancefloor for the lush Italo-disco tribute "Cochon Ville". The results are charming, melancholy and achingly beautiful.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

TRUST

TRST

ARTS & CRAFTS

8/10

Sprightly synth-pop from the Austra-affiliated duo

As one-third of Domino-signed Austra and now 50 per cent of Trust, Toronto synth doyenne Maya Postepski's contribution to the global sports-goth scene should not be underestimated. Like Austra, Trust appear vaguely menacing but actually peddle disarmingly pretty electropop – Katie Melua could plausibly warble "Bulbform" or "Dressed For Space". Beneath the Crystal Castles song titles ("Gloryhole", "Candy Walls") and Knife-like vocal distortion, Postepski and her chiselled partner Robert Alfons (visually: Robert Pattinson, vocally: Worzel Gummidge) hit upon a nifty formula that veers between mid-'80s Depeche Mode and fruity Eurodisco.

PIERS MARTIN

ANNA TERNHEIM

The Night Visitor

V2/COOPERATIVE

6/10

Chilly Nordic siren with a light Nashville glow

A Swedish singer-songwriter who recently relocated to New York, Ternheim's fourth album was recorded in Nashville in collaboration with Matt Sweeney, a seasoned sidekick to Will Oldham, Cat Power and others. Even with a host of Nashville players on board, including Oldham on backing vocals, Ternheim can't quite shake off the muted Scandi-poise of her previous releases, but stand-out moments occur on the sardonic infidelity ballad "God Don't Know" and the tender Celtic-country version of Pat McLaughlin's "The Longer The Waiting (The Sweeter The Kiss)", a whisky-warm romantic duet with Johnny Cash's longtime engineer Dave Ferguson.

STEPHEN DALTON

MINA TINDLE

Taranta

BELIEVE

6/10

Quirky yet charming Gallic pop

In recent years, the world has finally begun to acknowledge the experimental side of French pop, exemplified by the more wayward work of Brigitte Fontaine and Catherine Ribeiro. Mina Tindle's debut carries on this grand tradition – although it is in no way as out-there – suggesting Feist and Cat Power produced by Camille. In reality produced by Gallic legend JP Nataf, *Taranta* sees Tindle's girlish voice, fingerpicked guitar and compact songs subjected to subtle loops and junkyard percussion. There's a tendency to lean towards cloying quirkiness, but most of the songs here, such as the sing-song "Echo", underpinned by ominous cello drones, and the anthemic "Bells", featuring strange, buried electronics, showcase her charming, clever pop.

TOM PINNOCK

TWO WOUNDED BIRDS

Two Wounded Birds

HOLIDAY FRIENDS

7/10

Pre-Beatles pop redux from Drums protégés

This Kent quartet are mentored by Jacob Graham of The Drums and recently supported Glasvegas. And therein lies a handy 'a cross between...' reference for this striking debut. Think surf and Joe Meek-era Britpop plus the odd soaring indie chorus, sung in oddly post-Madchester tones by a lad from Margate who calls himself Johnny Danger, and wonder how the exuberance of the tunes and the twangy guitars overwhelm the contrivance. The excellent "Daddy's Junk" and "My Lonesome" explain what Cliff Richard and The Shadows might have sounded like if they'd hit it off with The Velvet Underground.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

UNSANE
Wreck
ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

7/10

New York trio celebrate their 20th year. Abrasively

The grimly graphic nature of their record sleeves has always hinted at what lies within, and the seventh from returning post-hardcore/screamo-metal veterans Unsane is no exception. Track titles such as "Rat", "Decay" and "Roach" signpost their view of an urban dystopia careering toward chaos, while the monstrous, pile-driving riffs, pulverising slo-mo beats and larynx-shredding fury of Chris Spencer's vocals complete the darkly uncompromising picture, oozing a disgust and despair that's as much personal as socio-political. A terrifying, on-the-edge cover of Flipper's "Ha Ha Ha" is a highlight, but the Scratch Acid-like "Don't" and "Stuck" also impress.

SHARON O'CONNELL

NICK WATERHOUSE
Time's All Gone
INNOVATIVE LEISURE

6/10

Californian 1950s R'n'B revivalist, still aged only 25

Nowadays you can barely fling a vintage 45 out of your window without hitting a singer who has recorded an authentically gritty analog soul album with Desco's in-house band. However, where the likes of Amy, Aloe, Mayer, Eli, Sharon and Lee recreate late '60s/early-'70s soul, Nick Waterhouse specialises in earlier, cruder 1950s variants of R'n'B and jump-jive. Born in California only 25 years ago, Waterhouse's big-lunged holler is efficiently exciting, but his debut album isn't so much – 12 songs, but 12 variants on the same song: a lovelorn 12-bar blues with baritone saxes.

JOHN LEWIS

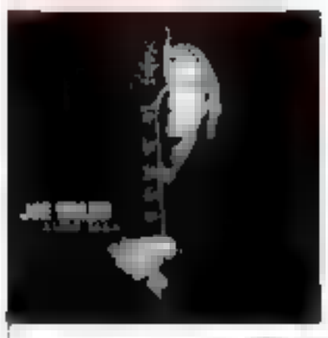
PATRICK WATSON
Adventures In Your Own Backyard
DOMINO

8/10

Confidently ambitious chamber pop

Blessed with a choirboy kind of voice, Montreal's Patrick Watson is a master of both dynamics and arrangements, his songs ebbing and flowing with a restrained grace and striking sensitivity. Like Rufus Wainwright tackling a Radiohead ballad, "Lighthouse" builds upon a muted piano and almost whispered vocal until mariachi horns relocate it to the Tex-Mex border, while "The Quiet Crowd"'s soft focus production gives way to strings and horns that could make High Llamas weep. There's drama here, too, in the restless "Blackwind" and "Morning Sheets"' grand orchestral sweep.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



JOE WALSH
Analog Man
FANTASY/CONCORD

6/10

First solo album in 20 years from seasoned Eagles guitarist

That Walsh feels like a man out of time is evident from the get-go. "*Welcome to cyberspace*," he sneers in the album's opening line, before railing against the "*digital dream*" and insisting he'll always be an "*analog man*". Seldom has retro sounded so pleasingly stubborn; there's barely a note of these ten tasteful mid-tempo rockers that would have sounded out of place on his '70s albums such as *So What* or *But Seriously, Folks...*. Stand-out track is the Eagles-like "Lucky That Way" with its pedal steel, minor-key harmonies and a sardonic lyric, intended as a sequel to his best-known solo hit, 1978's "Life's Been Good".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

HOW TO BUY... THE WALKMEN
The NYC rock sophisticates' best

Bows + Arrows
RECORD COLLECTION, 2004

"*You've got a NERVE to be asking a FAVOUR...*" The Walkmen's second album is dominated by "The Rat", a magnificent track arising from the band's collective improvisations. Rueful but powerful, The Walkmen's signature sound was rendered here in a wash of cinema organ and strong guitar riffing, all round the sound of good men having bad days.

7/10

A Hundred Miles Off
RECORD COLLECTION, 2006

No "Rat" here, but the follow-up if anything was a more satisfying and unified album, the band's slightly boozy lurching casting them as the world's most unlikely wedding band – an impression only strengthened by the occasional mariachi flourishes.

8/10

"Pussy Cats" Starring The Walkmen
RECORD COLLECTION, 2006

For Harry Nilsson the *Pussy Cats* album was something of a disaster – the conclusion to his booze-addled participation in Lennon's 'Lost Weekend'. For The Walkmen, it was a match made in heaven, as they assumed costume and effortlessly inhabited these ragged tales from a careworn life.

7/10

JOHN ROBINSON

DON WILLIAMS
And So It Goes
SUGAR HILL

7/10

Business as usual from Nashville's Gentle Giant

It may be his first for eight years, but don't expect any grand redesign from Don Williams. Everything here is much as you'd expect, his languid burr set against twinkly acoustic guitars and mopey strings. He's back with Garth Fundis, too, his producer for 17 years and the man behind some of his most easy-rolling albums. Not that all this is necessarily a bad thing. Williams' horizontal approach makes for a refreshingly conversational set of songs, including "I Just Come Here For The Music", a duet with longtime admirer Alison Krauss, and "Infinity", a weird rumination on the existence of alien lifeforms.

ROB HUGHES

THE WALKMEN
Heaven
BELLA UNION

8/10

New York City rockers still on the side of the angels

Once hailed as the new Strokes, DC-via-NYC cool customers The Walkmen never captured their moment quite like Julian Casablancas and his impossibly handsome bandmates, but their burn has been pleasantly slow. Treble dials once more up to 11, album number seven sees the now thirtysomething dads comfortable in lantern-jawed mature mode, singer Hamilton Leithauser finding an optimum mix of troubled Paul Westerberg and reverb-drenched Frankie Valli on "Nightingales" and "Love Is Luck". The heady early 2000s are long gone, but The Walkmen are weathering the iPhone age with some panache.

JIM WIRTH

WOVENHAND
Live At Roepaen
GLITTERHOUSE

8/10

Live CD/DVD twofer from atmospheric Colorado quartet

David Eugene Edwards' decision to wind down 16 Horsepower seven years ago allowed him free rein to explore the more minimal aesthetic of Wovenhand. This spartan live set from Holland, recorded in an ancient church in the winter of 2010, draws on drones and atmospherics for much of its power, with Edwards' stentorian rumble rising from the gathering gloom. Fans of his old band will doubtless enjoy the stripped-down reworkings of "Hutterite Mule" and "Flutter", both from swansong album *Folklore*, though it's songs like "The Speaking Hands" and "Kingdom Of Ice" that perhaps best capture the band's malevolent intensity.

ROB HUGHES

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10 Masterpiece 1 Poor!

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TRACKLIST

Disc One

1 Millionenspiel
2 Waiting For The Streetcar
3 Evening All Day
4 Deadly Doris
5 Graublau
6 When Darkness Comes
7 Blind Mirror Surf
8 Oscura Primavera
9 Bubble Rap

CAN

The Lost Tapes

MUTE

This huge set of unheard cuts, forgotten by the band, restates the pioneers' importance. *By John Robinson*

9/10

IT'S A TESTAMENT to how far out Can's music still seems, over 30 years after the band originally split, that we try to understand it not by looking for musical answers, but by clinging to fantastical suppositions. There are whispers about magic, the better to understand the ghostly power of the band's *Tago Mago* album. There's the notion that the group consulted a practitioner of Santeria, a religion of West African/Caribbean origin in which drumming forms part of the ceremony – and that he confided to Can drummer Jaki Liebezeit the secrets of his art. He was, needless to say, subsequently executed.

Even the most basic, substantiated facts of Can's decade-long career from 1968 (the band's early base at Schloss Nörvenich outside Cologne, a castle owned by an art dealer, where the band on occasion played for his bemused guests; their subsequent home in a disused cinema at Weilerswist where the walls were lined with army surplus mattresses) seem to derive more from the imaginings of a novelist than the labours of a rock biographer.

And then there's the music. The work of a unit comprising German scholars of modern

TRACKLIST *(Continued)*

Disc Two

1 Your Friendly Neighbourhood Whore
2 True Story
3 The Agreement
4 Midnight Sky
5 Desert
6 Spoon (Live)
7 Dead Pigeon Suite
8 AbraCadaBraxas
9 A Swan Is Born
10 The Loop

Disc Three

1 Godzilla Fragment
2 On The Way To Mother Sky
3 Midnight Men
4 Networks Of Foam
5 Messers, Scissors, Fork And Light
6 Barnacles
7 E.F.S.108
8 Private Nocturnal
9 Alice
10 Mushroom (Live)
11 One More Saturday Night (Live)

Can in the late '60s: (l-r) Holger Czukay, Irmin Schmidt, Malcolm Mooney, Jaki Liebezeit, Michael Karoli. Inset: in their studio at Weilerswist – note the mattresses on the walls

classical composition, a free jazz drummer, and extemporising vocalists from other cultures entirely, the band recorded themselves ceaselessly. What gave us landmark albums like *Tago Mago*, the melodic, groovy *Ege Bamyasi* and the hypnotic and minimal *Future Days* was not only the spectral voicings of Irmin Schmidt, the savage soloing of Michael Karoli, the warm Morse code bass of Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebezeit's "unhuman" drumming, but a process of editing – the democratic band at benign loggerheads, kilometres of spliced tape rising to their experimental knees. From chaos, sublime beauty. If the studio was a castle, what must their vault be like? The Can Archive, one imagines, is a place of sprawling chaos, but infinite possibility.

As *The Lost Tapes* goes some way to illustrating, again even that is not *quite* true. Certainly, Can ran tape on all their rehearsals, but they also approached their work economically and methodically – excerpting material from their tapes as they went with an eye to using it later, then recording over the unwanted tape. Compiled from 50 hours of such fragments, what is contained here, then, is a world away from that boxset staple, the "alternate take". Instead, there is a rich mixture of the many areas in which the band explored: movie/TV soundtrack recordings, live tapes, promising but undeveloped rehearsal fragments, and hitherto unused compositions. All of which are valuable additions to our enjoyment of the core canon. The value here isn't only that, though – it's also the final testimony to, and product of, Can's working methods.

"Spontaneous composition" was Can's aim, and it was something the band achieved by a highly developed (as Irmin Schmidt describes it, "magical") sensitivity to each other as players. Here that tendency is abundantly represented in two Malcolm Mooney-fronted tracks "Waiting For The Streetcar" and "Deadly Doris", wherein the singer's improvised lyrics direct a savage tempo for two longform workouts. Likewise, this collection makes choice selections from the band's live tapes, in which tracks like "Spoon" roam in the moment far from their original co-ordinates onto other maps altogether. It's in these locations where terrifying forays like "AbraCadaBraxas" and "Networks Of Foam" were also birthed.

"Spontaneous" however, did not mean Can achieved their finished product instantly. *The Lost Tapes* duly offers some thrilling glimpses inside the band's studios, on the journey towards finished songs. On CD2, we can observe the gentle group playing of "A Swan Is Born" that highlights the gently thrumming of Holger Czukay's bass, the background textures of Schmidt's keyboards, and the enchanting melody plotted between them by Damo Suzuki – a journey that will eventually arrive at "Sing Swan Song" from *Ege Bamyasi*, one of the group's most beautiful single works.

On CD3, we again enter the derangement of "Mother Sky", a gigantic composition in the world of Can, and which fans will have heard in versions long (as it appeared on *Soundtracks* at 14-and-a-half minutes) and succinct (as edited for the great version on the *Cannibalism* compilation). Here, we join the track at what sounds like the very first four minutes of its travels: Michael Karoli's screaming guitar tone is in place, as is a tribal pounding from Jaki Liebezeit, but we have yet to uncover the octave pattern of Czukay's bass riff that will pilot the track onward. Likewise, on CD3, "Messers Scissors, Fork And Light" finds the group in a space that's familiar but different, the mood set by Irmin Schmidt's lightly flanging keyboard. Suzuki's vocals gently suggest we are arriving in the neighbourhood of "Spoon", but without actually stopping outside the house.

This, like other significant pieces on the album, derives from the band's soundtrack work, and is a credit in part to the work of Jono Podmore. The man behind the Can remasters from 2004, it's Podmore who has assumed for this project a similar role to that of Holger Czukay in Can – it has fallen to him to edit extant related fragments together in a coherent and a sympathetic way. These extend from freaky

The jawdropping "Graublau" makes PiL sound like The Moody Blues

Buried treasure

Found! Four outside-the-box tracks from inside *The Lost Tapes*

"DEAD PIGEON SUITE"
A cousin to "Vitamin C" from *Ege Bamyasi*, this 12-minute collage collects fragments from Can's music for *Tote Taube in der Beethovenstrasse*. Convincingly splices together a medieval flute theme and hardcore Liebezeit/Czukay funk.

"OBSCURA/PRIMAVERA"
An exquisitely pretty piece, here sandwiched between more aggressive work, the contemplative meeting of Karoli's guitar and Czukay's bass in a soundbed of Irmin Schmidt's synth washes invents post-rock in about 1972.

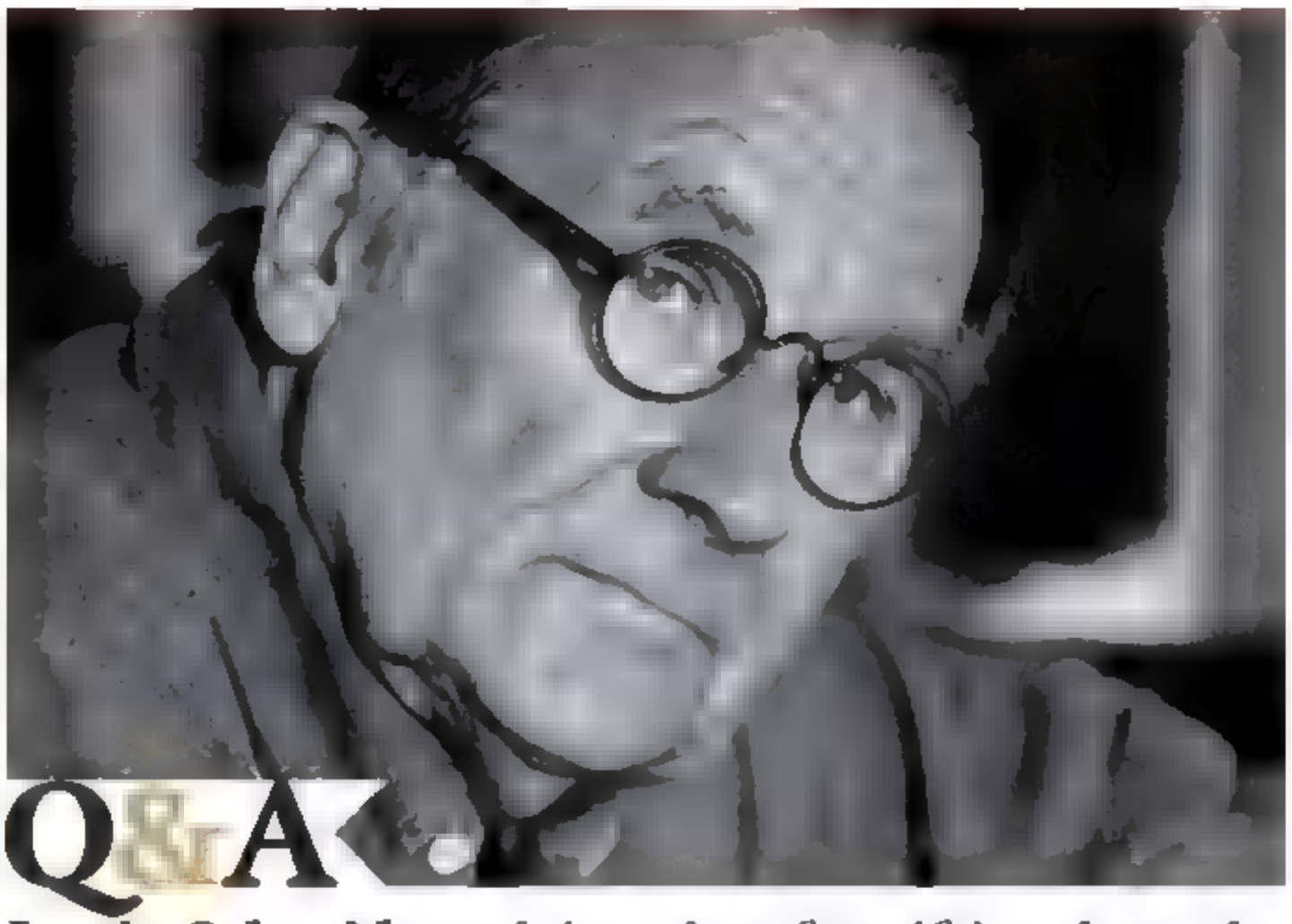
"MAINTENGINE"
The earliest track chronologically, this first track, with its driving Liebezeit/Czukay rhythm section is one of the most immediately "Can-like". Features sax playing from Gerd Dudek, a colleague of Liebezeit's from the Manfred Schoof Quintet.

"PRIVATE NOCTURNAL"
A sleepy improvisation: Czukay's bass roams up and down as the group places small melodies adrift on Liebezeit's cymbal rolls. Quiet, please: they're inventing *In Rainbows*.

ambient recordings like "Evening All Day" (a ghostly piece that combines distant chatting, violin mangling and synth bubbling in jarring sequence), the contemplative "Private Nocturnal" (in which Czukay's soft bass anchors some wafting synth and drifting vocal) to the violent ("Godzilla Fragment" which memorialises the band's live noise tactic, the "Godzilla") and frankly absurd ("The Agreement" is the sound of someone urinating).

Podmore is also behind the set's most satisfying elements – the suites constructed from unused soundtrack fragments. Of these, all excellent, the most powerful is "Graublau" (a collage of material intended for the film *Ein großer graublauer Vogel*) which is simply jawdropping, explaining the affinity between Can's sense of momentum and group space and the way post-punk bands could use their intelligence to occupy a similar space. It's great. It makes PiL sound like The Moody Blues.

Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore recalled his first experience of Can as finding this notionally "rock" group coming from a place completely "outside of rock". *The Lost Tapes* confirms that pleasing impression and applies it to the boxset format itself. Here is virtuosity without ego, spontaneity rendered anew, and archive material of real contemporary value. It marks a definitive end to the band's journey. Outside of rock doesn't go far enough.



Q&A

Irmin Schmidt explains why, after sifting through 50 hours of tape, this is Can's last ever 'new' release

Were these tapes really lost?
No, they were forgotten more or less. We always had tapes running, but 10 years' tapes running all the time 12 hours a day would come to an unimaginably big pile, so we overplayed a lot of tapes. But perhaps a tape would have 10 minutes on it that we thought were good. So there were little snippets and bits and pieces of all kinds from all different periods on one tape. So it was all a big... chaos. So that's why no-one wanted to touch it. But (*Schmidt's wife*) Hildegard insisted I did this work. It was about 50 hours, but I found three hours that were really good.

Did you have any idea what was in there?
I knew especially there was the music that makes up "Graublau" on the album. I knew that one particularly because I had done a very special work for that film where I recorded at home lots of tapes and loops from shortwave radio. So these sounds are brought to the studio and then we played to it. Then I took that and went to the editing room and made a montage for the film from all of that. I remembered that as being one of the really nice pieces. The pieces I heard with Malcolm (*Mooney, original Can vocalist*) were totally unknown to me. When I heard them, I remembered we had played them – but I didn't remember before.

How did Can vocalists determine the character of Can music?
Can is one composer – if one member changes, the components are different, and it becomes a different organism. Our singers were not what you would call "lead singers". Their voices were their instruments. They were instrumentalists who used their voice for being a member of the composition. But of course, when one went away or another came, something in the group changed because we all played so intently listening to everyone else – the whole chemistry changed.

"The tapes were all a big... chaos. That's why no-one wanted to touch it"

How were things different with Malcolm and Damo?
There was a rhythmical connection between Malcolm and Jaki for instance, so they together almost formed a rhythm group. Later, there was a very obvious understanding between Damo, me and Michael, melodically, particularly with Damo and Michael – Holger, Jaki and me were 10 years older than Michael and Damo. They were of the same age and that changed the chemistry.

You tried out Tim Hardin as singer, didn't you?
No! We did not try out Tim Hardin, that's wrong. We met him at the hotel where he was on tour – somewhere in Birmingham or Leeds, somewhere in England. He just... came with us to the concert and came with us onstage and it was fun. I think he did it a second time, because he was in the mood and on tour. But there was no question that he would have joined the group – neither of us had that idea. He was a singer-songwriter, a fantastic singer-songwriter, but he had to make his own songs and he would not have fitted in this kind of thing.

Given the way you made music, were there a lot of arguments about the final composition?
Of course, sometimes things had to be discussed, and sometimes there were different opinions about things. But we didn't aimlessly jam for hours, there was always some kind of spontaneous idea, and then we had to find the essence of it. This we would play over and over and find the right groove. Sometimes we would fight, but that's normal when you have four very strong personalities. We didn't have any personal kind of... problems.

There were 50 hours of tapes; this is three hours long. Is there more to come?
This is the final extract from the archive. More, there isn't. There are another 47 hours not worth releasing, which will definitely disappear.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON

PAUL SIMON

Graceland

SONY

The 25th-anniversary edition of Simon's surprising classic. *By Andrew Mueller*

8/10

MANY BELIEVED *GRACELAND* should not have been made at all. Simon's South African journey seemed a straightforward breach of U■ General Assembly Resolution 35/206 – the admonishment, revered as holy writ by Simon's more pious peers, to "...writers, artists, musicians and other personalities ■ boycott South Africa". When Simon and his SA collaborators played at the Albert Hall in 1987, the picket line included Billy Bragg, Paul Weller and Jerry Dammers.

A quarter of a century later, Simon's determination to create *Graceland* – if not the unnecessarily petulant defences of it he made at the time – seems abundantly vindicated. The Apartheid state in which *Graceland* was conceived had barely a decade of its squalid existence left. More to the point, *Graceland* became one of those records that transcends every division imaginable (more than 14 million sold, and counting). Between Simon's careful arranging and inquisitive writing, and the glorious performances of the musicians around him, the gaudy mausoleum at 3764 Elvis Presley Boulevard in Memphis was repurposed as a sanctuary of redemption – and, not incidentally, as a harbinger of the brighter possibilities of the imminent new South Africa. The only foot Simon put wrong was involving Linda Ronstadt, who had taken the Krugerrand to play Sun City, and who – like all such – should have been compelled to stand silently in the corner, adorned by a dunce's cap, for some considerable while.

Simon may have been past caring. The '80s had been tough, yielding only the soundtrack album *One-Trick Pony* and the underwhelming *Hearts & Bones*. Whatever Simon thought when he found himself tapping a boot to *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Volume II* by South African group The Boyoyo Boys, it wasn't, 'Here's my ticket back to the bigtime.' A

TRACKLIST

1 The Boy In The Bubble
2 Graceland
3 I Know What I Know
4 Gumboots
5 Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes
6 You Can Call Me Al
7 Under African Skies
8 Homeless
9 Crazy Love, Vol II
10 That Was Your Mother
11 All Around The World Or The Myth Of Fingerprints

LUISE GUBB

FEATURES

What's In The Box?

The Super Deluxe edition

1 Original *Graceland* album
2 Five-song second disc featuring demos and "audio narrative" narrated by Paul Simon
3 DVD: *Under African Skies* documentary
4 DVD: The African Concert from Zimbabwe, 1987; music videos
5 Facsimile Paul Simon lyric pad
6 Poster (signed; only on super-deluxe £200 version)
7 80-page book, featuring photos; interview

desperation is discernible in the opening track, "The Boy In The Bubble". For all the lurching exuberance of Forere Motloheloa's accordion, it's a portent of apocalypse, "Bad Moon Rising" via "London Calling" ("*staccato signals of constant information*" remains an unbetterable description of the shortly-to-dawn online age). The ensuing title track may well endure as Simon's finest few minutes (he has said as much, half proud and half fearful, himself). These two songs are unmistakeable as Paul Simon works: fidgety, wordy, angsty rather than passionate. In the context of the album, they're hesitant dips of the toe in unfamiliar waters: the rush of immersion that follows is giddy and fantastic. The next few tracks are Simon teaching himself the rhythms and quirks of the mbaqanga music that had entranced him, and unwinding perceptibly in the process. On "Diamonds..." he all but cedes centre stage to the mournful harmonies of venerable choir Ladysmith Black Mambazo, on "I Know What I Know" he's lightened up to a barely recognisable degree, almost resembling someone performing a parody of Simon at his more mannered and earnest ("*She said 'Don't I know you/From the cinematographer's party?'*"). By the time he reaches "You Can Call Me Al", he's teasing himself about the midlife crisis that prompted the *Graceland* experiment in the first place. If brass instruments could ever be said to laugh, they're doing it here.

It may have been the sheer unbound joy of *Graceland* that jarred with so many at the time: in the '80s, South Africa was a subject that Very Serious people took Very Seriously. Apartheid was of course a monstrosity, but it would be absurd to suggest that Simon's introduction of SA's music to the world prolonged ■ – and quite plausible to suggest that it did some small amount to hasten its undoing. Wisely, Simon made an intimately personal album rather than an explicitly political one, but *Graceland* was nevertheless a liberation.

EXTRAS The entry-level box contains *Graceland*, five bonus tracks, audio narration by Simon, three videos and live footage. The Collector's Edition contains all that plus a 1987 concert in Zimbabwe, 80-page book, poster replicas and Simon's lyrics pad. An audiophile vinyl version includes a poster and download card. The limited Super Deluxe edition *(pictured above)* is available from Simon's website and includes all of the above, plus a signed and numbered poster.

The five bonus tracks have appeared on previous reissues. Four are sketchy demos: instrumental versions of "You Can Call Me Al" and "Crazy Love", both much closer ■ the upful shuffles of Simon's beloved township music cassettes than the polished final products. There's a looping chorus of "Homeless" with a pretty guitar part shorn from the finished a cappella epic, and a fidgety fumble at "Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes" with far too much slap bass. The other track is an early "All Around The World", a Los Lobos collaboration that sounds fresher for a relative lack of '80s production. Also included is *The Story Of Graceland*, 10 minutes of Simon discussing the writing and arranging of the title track.

BILL ANDERSON

From This Pen/ Get While The Gettin's Good

HUX

Double set from cosy Nashville traditionalist

"Whisperin'" Bill Anderson is nobody's idea of a rebel. His career as ■ Nashville songwriter was followed by spells as a gameshow host and spokesman for a restaurant chain named after his song "Po' Folks", one of the comic highlights of his 1965 album, *From This Pen*. But his skill as a songwriter shouldn't be overlooked. He introduces *From This Pen* as "a collection of 12 dreams that came true", and it includes Anderson's versions of hits he wrote for other artists, including the fine "City Lights" (a hit for Ray Price) and "Saginaw, Michigan" (made famous by Lefty Frizzell). True, Anderson can sometimes veer into self-parody, but there's no doubting the wit of "I've Enjoyed As Much Of This As I Can Stand", or the bleak poetry of "That's What It's Like To Be Lonesome", with its lyrical evocation of "*heartless cold unknowns*". The second album, from 1967, is uneven, but it does include "The First Mrs Jones", ■ sweetly rendered murder song from the point-of-view of a psychopath, and "Bad Seed", in which a menacing tambourine keeps the beat as a rolling stone bids farewell.

EXTRAS None.

ALASTAIR McKAY

AVENGERS

Avengers (reissue, 1983)

WATER

San Francisco punkers' "Pink Album" re-emerges

Sounding like an apostate Blue Öyster Cult cover band with a need for speed, California's Avengers lasted just two years, during which they released one EP – 1977's fiery "We Are The One", "The Amerikan In Me" (killer phrase: "*Kennedy was murdered by the F-B-I!*"), produced by Sex Pistol Steve Jones, followed shortly on a self-titled EP after they were ignored to death in June 1979. Fronted by the striking, short-cropped Penelope Houston, a Seattle-born art student with ■ bad Patti Smith habit, their reputation has endured 33 years of bad blood, with 1983's posthumous anthology, generally known as "The Pink Album", ■ proto-hardcore article of faith. In his sleevenote for this 2CD reissue – long overdue as ■ result of legal battles – Greil Marcus dubs the Avengers "the best punk band in San Francisco, in moments the best in the country". Still, Avengers' painfully self-conscious posturing ("White Nigger") and self-empowerment bullshit ("I Believe In Me") hover tantalisingly between good-awful and godawful.

EXTRAS A full-on cupboard clearance job for the second CD spews forth 17 rarely heard tracks taken from rehearsal and demo tapes, ■ punked-up cover of "Money (That's What I Want)" and unheard vocal mixes.

JIM WIRTH

Archive

BREWER & SHIPLEY
Down In LA
(reissue, 1968)
NOW SOUNDS

9/10

Reflections on Sunset Strip: long-neglected California pop masterpiece unearthed

Known primarily, if unfairly, for their 1971 pot novelty "One Toke Over The Line", Brewer & Shipley's roots lay in LA's mid-1960s coffeehouses and the Byrds/Springfield tangle of folk-into-rock. Ambitious, harmonically complex, redolent of its heady times, *Down In LA* was instantly forgotten upon release. But, like a hippy Everly Brothers, or a darkly drawn West Coast mutation of Simon & Garfunkel, the duo's dazzling vocal arrangements – intricate, soulful, brotherly – coincide with a pristine studio effort to startling effect. Wrecking Crew heavies are on board (Hal Blaine, James Burton, Leon Russell), but it's the duo's hypnotic songwriting – LA chaos circa 1968 in microcosm – that burns through. The soaring "Green Bamboo", strings and percussion reinforcing its swirling melody, belongs in the upper echelon of LA pop (think The Merry-Go-Round, or dare one say, *Forever Changes*). Others, from the rumbling, psychedelic "Truly Right", to the dark majesty of "I Can't See Her", to their answer to the Springfield's "For What It's Worth" – "An Incredible State Of Affairs" – shine brightly indeed: a major discovery.

EXTRAS: Mono mix of "Keeper Of The Keys"; plus extensive notes, photos and commentary from both Brewer and Shipley.

LUKE TORN

DAWES
North Hills
(reissue, 2009)
LOOSE

8/10

Rising Malibu quartet's debut

Now that they're pally with Springsteen and Occupying Wall Street with Jackson Browne, the time seems right to revisit the debut from Dawes, whose rousing follow-up *Nothing Is Wrong* was one of *Uncut*'s favourite albums of the past year. Much of the formula was already clearly in place, namely their open-throated harmonies and fresh-whiskered update of '70s California rock. Though the live-in-the-studio approach to *North Hills* (again overseen by *Nothing Is Wrong* producer Jonathan Wilson) makes everything sound nicely scuffed at the edges. It takes a degree of hubris to open your first album with a couple of five-minute ballads, as they do on "That Western Skyline" and the soulful "Love Is All I Am", but the best moments actually happen elsewhere. The chugging groove of "My Girl To Me" is a dead ringer for early Little Feat, offset beautifully by "Take Me Out Of The City", a spare acoustic tune marked by Taylor Goldsmith's plangent voice and a dash of organ straight from Al Kooper's handbook. There are strong flavours of Band Of Horses and Fleet Foxes, especially the soaring four-way vocals of "When My Time Comes", but the most impressive aspect of all is the way Dawes make the whole thing sound so wonderfully uncomplicated.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES

DONOVAN
The Essential Donovan
EPIC/LEGACY

8/10

Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame beckons; standard issue, 2CD roundup of the bard's best

As a kind of Pied Piper of the psychedelic era, Donovan Leitch breezed through the '60s, first as a folksinger following closely in the path cleared by Dylan, then reinventing himself within a rich tableau of jazz, blues and Eastern influences as a colourful prince of pop. Opening with a brace of his acoustic folk/protest material – earnest and callow, but not without charm – *The Essential...* then gets down to business with 28 of its remaining 30 cuts from his 1966-1970 prime. Ear-candy smashes like "Sunshine Superman" and "Mellow Yellow", perhaps overplayed, still manage to embody a certain je ne sais quoi of '60s cosmopolitanism, while early era lesser-knowns, ie, "The Land Of Doesn't Have To Be", show his charms with spidery melodies and cascading lyrics. For all his preciousness, and Donovan was dangerously silly or insipid at times, he just as often exuded a keen pop sense (the unforgettable vocal riff of "Atlantis") or expanded the depth, range and texture of rock'n'roll ("Sunny Goodge Street", "Hurdy Gurdy Man"). The dark narrative "Sand And Foam", taken from the reissue of his underrated '68 live opus, is an inspired deep cut on this smart entry-level sampler into the Donovan millieu.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

CODEINE
When I See The Sun
NUMERO GROUP

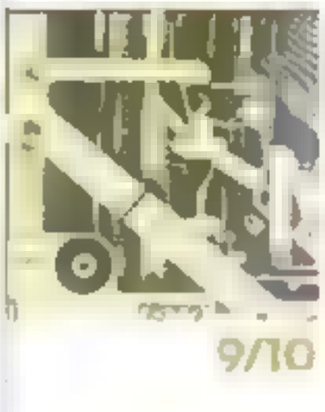
7/10

Exhaustive reissues from seminal somnambulators

Victims of music history's need to tag and file, NYC trio Codeine have been declared the originators of "slowcore", a sound characterised by its glacial pacing and monolithic weight, its cavernous spaces and dynamics of laser-cut precision. In their six-year career from 1989, they released just two albums (*Frigid Stars* and *The White Birch*) and one EP ("Barely Real"), but Codeine's template gained wider recognition after it was modified by the likes of Low and Mogwai. This handsome package (available in deluxe 2CD or boxset format, both with liner notes that include essays by Wayne Coyne and others) collects together all three records, and so features both original drummer Chris Brokaw (who quit to pursue Come in 1992) and his replacement, Doug Scharin of Rex. They underline not only the trio's extreme steadiness of artistic purpose, which went way beyond the idea of "progression", but also their emotional force. There's a lot here to digest in one sitting, but the likes of "Realize" and "Pea" suspend time in compellingly majestic fashion.

EXTRAS: A bonus banquet of demos, live and previously unreleased recordings, singles and Peel session tracks, with "Broken-Hearted Wine" showing their rougher and more noisily distorted side.

SHARON O'CONNELL



DEUTSCH AMERIKAN-ISCHE FREUNDSCHAFT
Ein Produkt Der Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft
(reissue, 1979)
BUREAU B

9/10

Hard-as-nails Neue Deutsche Welle avant-punk

If you remember DAF as the punitive Electronic Body Music duo of Robert Görl and Gabi Delgado, best known for the whip-crack of 1981's "Der Mussolini", then this will have you thinking again. Recorded by four members of their original five-piece lineup, it's a furious, breathtaking slice of post-punk. Scraping in at just over half an hour long, its 22 short tracks are carved from raw recording sessions, with blankly repeating drums, like Krautrock on serious uppers. Much of the intrigue in *Ein Produkt Der DAF* comes from hearing music figuring itself out in real time – this isn't 'improvised' as such, but it has an unpredictable edge that has it sitting well alongside other pioneering German groups of the time, like Einstürzende Neubauten, Palais Schaumburg and Der Plan. Indeed, Kurt Dahlke would leave DAF soon after this album was released ■ join Der Plan; he also made great records as Pyrolator. In a very real sense, this album is one of the building blocks of the German underground. And DAF would never be quite this powerful again.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

FATHER YOD & THE SOURCE FAMILY
The Thought Adjusters
DRAG CITY

6/10

Jams run free – a little too free

Like most records from religious sects, cults, groups of worship etc., Father Yod's albums are generally more interesting for their backstory than their musical content. This was conclusively proven by the *God And Hair* 13CD boxset, of which approximately three CDs were worthwhile, and one of the highlights was a recording of the late, great Sky Saxon ranting about dogs. *The Thought Adjusters* follows the same logic of uncertain returns. Plundering the vaults for a double-album's worth of jams, most of the record drifts along, meandering down cul-de-sacs of remedial psychedelic movement, blissed but somewhat boring. Father Yod's rants are entertaining enough, but he only transcends when he lets loose the syntax, singing in a babble-stream of vocal noise, like on the best, most furious parts of "Sleepy Heads", one of the moments where the Source Family really take things to another level. Indeed, it's when the group move into extended territory, like on the wild 27-minute finale "Spin Around", that they really achieve lift-off. Cull the flab and there's two sides of a thoroughly decent psychsploitation set here.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

EDGAR FROESE

Solo: The Virgin Years 1974-1983

EMI

7/10

Tangerine Dream mainman flies alone across four CDs

Edgar Froese's solo career didn't so much signal a breakaway from his regular band but rather an accompaniment to it. Tangerine Dream had already established themselves at Virgin with 1974's unlikely hit *Phaedra* when Froese issued his own debut, *Aqua*. The liquid propulsion of the title track, rippling with aquatic effects and layered washes of synthetics, remains a classic of primitive ambience. As does the eerie drone of the closer "Upland", though it's the two tracks on his 1975 successor *Epsilon In Malaysian Pale* that perhaps rank as his greatest solo work. Froese's next Virgin effort, 1978's *Ages*, sounding for the most part like a discreet absorption of new wave and disco culture, is all cantering micro-grooves and bleating electronica. *Stuntman* (1979) is a largely forgettable, ethereal mix of floaty keyboards and minimal rhythms, rescued only by the 10-minute suite, "It Would Be Like Samoa". By the time of 1983's *Pinnacles*, it was clear that both Froese and the Dream were now heading in a New Age-y, altogether less interesting, direction.

EXTRAS: A truncated version of *Aqua*'s 1974 epic "NGC 891" is the keeper among four bonus tracks.

ROB HUGHES

GEORGE HARRISON

Early Takes Volume 1

HIP O RECORDS

8/10

Quiet ones from the quiet one

Now, it seems, the slow unpeeling of the George Harrison archive is beginning. Designed to accompany the Martin Scorsese documentary boxset, *Early Takes Volume 1* – even the title sounds like a bootleg – is a collection of ten demos, six of which ended up on *All Things Must Pass*, two glorious covers (Dylan's "Mama You've Been On My Mind", which Harrison had played during the *Let It Be* sessions, and the Everlys' "Let It Be Me") and two songs saved for later albums, "The Light That Has Lighted The World" and "Woman Don't You Cry For Me". All of them – except, arguably, "My Sweet Lord" – benefit from these spartan, bandless versions, as Harrison brings a delicacy to the material that Phil Spector, for one, chose not to. This is a delightful and charming addition to the original body of George's work, which highlights the quality of his songwriting and presents the material in a fresh light. Sadly, it's unclear why the quality has not been matched by quantity; those of us growing up in the 1970s who thought George's Beatle/solo greatest hits was short weight will be nostalgically jolted back in time when they realise that this collection barely makes it past the 30-minute mark.

EXTRAS: None.

DAVID QUANTICK

RICHIE HAVENS

My Own Way

WIENERWORLD

6/10

First time on CD for Woodstock hero's earliest recordings

Back in 1967, Havens was an unknown folk singer in Greenwich Village until Dylan's manager Albert Grossman secured him a deal with Verve, which released his 'debut' album *Mixed Bag* later that year. By then, though, he'd already recorded a bunch of demos for producer Alan Douglas, who sought to cash in on Havens' growing reputation by overdubbing an electric band and releasing the tracks in '68 on two albums: *The Richie Havens Record* and *Electric Havens*. Havens and Verve were predictably unimpressed and they were soon withdrawn – and the tracks have remained unavailable until now. Essentially the material is the live set Havens was playing at the time in Village clubs, a mix of trad songs such as "CC Rider", Dylan covers and folk-soul reinterpretations of Sam Cooke and Ray Charles. The trademarks of his artistry are already in place, and if Havens was irritated by Douglas' unauthorised overdubs, he had no need. The arrangements are tasteful and well-judged, with flute, harmonica and congas augmenting the uncredited band, who were clearly asked to imitate Dylan's early electric sound, which they do with some aplomb.

EXTRAS: None. Irritatingly, we get only 14 of the 17 tracks on the original vinyl LPs.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

REGIONAL GARLAND

Mixed Sugar: The Complete Works 1970-1987

NOW AGAIN

6/10

Retrospective of overlooked US soulman

Regional Garland may sound like a chain of provincial garden centres but he is in fact a soul singer and songwriter from Flint, Michigan who almost found fame in the latter half of the Motown era. Despite promising starts with local labels and bands such as The Perfections, he might have been better off putting his energies into perennials. His songs, perhaps, are the reason Regional remained regional. The blue-eyed slush of "I Need Love" must have seemed a little passé even in the early '70s, while the tracks he wrote and produced for studio combo Brilliance in '87, including "Hit Girl" and "Chillin' Out", have at best a flimsy charm. Wisely, the meat of this 21-track comp focuses on Garland's mid-'70s Mixed Sugar outfit, whose heavier arrangements and funkier approach led to the likes of "It's A Bad Feeling" and "Fifteen Ain't Young No More" becoming Northern Soul standards. Of course, just as things were looking good for Mixed Sugar, Garland suffered a collapsed lung and was instructed not to sing – a shame, because the three unreleased Mixed Sugar tracks here draw attention to his fine Smokey Robinson falsetto. Ultimately, after forays into disco and stints working with Michael Bolton, Garland never fulfilled his potential.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN

HOW TO BUY... GEORGE HARRISON

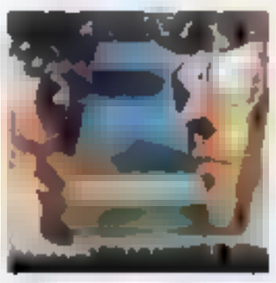
The Dark Horse's post-Fabs highlights

All Things Must Pass

APPLE, 1970

A triple LP, technically, full of years of songs that The Beatles rejected, including the wonderful country-rock title track, the global hit and source of legal trouble "My Sweet Lord", and a side of awful jamming.

8/10



Thirty Three & 1/3

DARK HORSE, 1976

His first for his own label, good tunes ("Crackerbox Palace", "Beautiful Girl", "Pure Smokey") and the droll courtroom pop of "This Song". Harrison sounds lively, amused and actually of the material world.

7/10

Cloud Nine

DARK HORSE, 1987

Who knew Jeff Lynne was a Beatles fan? Harrison's fellow Wilbury produces and arranges worldwide hits like blues cover "Got My Mind Set On You" and one of the best Beatles self-pastiches, "When We Was Fab".

7/10

DAVID QUANTICK

JULIA HOLTER

Tragedy (reissue, 2011)

NIGHT SCHOOL

9/10

CD release for LA synth doyenne's enchanting debut

In recent months, it seems only Mary Beard has done more than Julia Holter to get Classics trending. Anyone fortunate enough late last year to have picked up one of the limited vinyl copies of *Tragedy* (which now go for £100) will at some point have skimmed through Wikipedia's entry on Ancient Greek scribe Euripides to brush up on *Hippolytus*, the very tragedy that sparked Holter's unorthodox song-cycle. Now it transpires the vinyl contained shortened versions: Night School's CD is unedited. The difference is negligible. Holter, a CalArts music teacher, recorded *Tragedy* in the same circumstances as March's well-received full-length *Ekstasis* – at home, alone, for fun. There's an organic, human quality to both, a folkish vibe not unlike James Blake's, but where *Ekstasis* toyed with formal pop arrangements, *Tragedy* is wildy imaginative, weaving field recordings and soft electronic pulses with layers of crumbling organ and voice to colour the narrative arc of the play. If one song stands out, it's "Goddess Eyes", the dulcet vocoder lament that first drew attention to Holter and which she expanded for *Ekstasis*. But like any decent play, *Tragedy* should be experienced in one sitting.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN

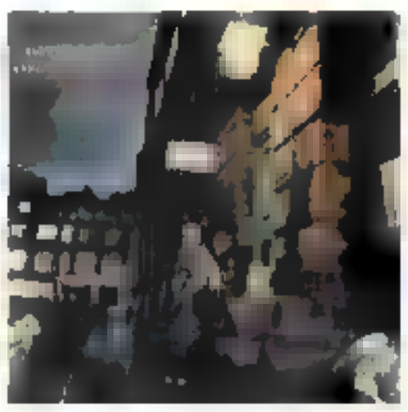
DAVID BOWIE

The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars

EMI

40th-anniversary clean-up shows the devil in the detail.

By Rob Young



7/10

ZIGGY STARDUST: The Motion Picture – the album of Bowie's 1973 'retirement' show at the Hammersmith Odeon – was only released in 1983, and it was the first Bowie album I ever bought. The electric atmosphere of that night, when Ziggy's time took its last cigarette, made the studio LP, when I eventually heard it much later, seem pale and restrained by comparison, and I've never quite been able to shake that feeling.

Try this thought experiment, though: put yourself in Bowie's kinky boots, back in late 1971, when he began work on this songbook. 'Glitter rock' (not glam yet) was little more than a single T.Rex *TOTP* appearance; Slade, Sweet, Mud, Gary Glitter et al were nowhere to be seen; the 'concept album' was still in the hands of prog rockers like King Crimson, Yes and Genesis. For an artist like Bowie, who had already tried on several stylistic hats in a series of different strikes on the charts with little success, this was surely a huge gamble. If anyone knew him at all, it was as the ringletted hippy of "Space Oddity" or the flouncy, cross-dressing queen of *The Man Who Sold The World*. To launch himself as a cropped, jumpsuited, bovver-boots rocker, brandishing an unwieldily-titled album which never quite made it clear whether he was posing as this Ziggy character, or merely singing his story, was, frankly, a daring step into the dark.

The apex of Bowie's glam period was, really, the Brechtian panto of *Aladdin Sane* – in many ways a very different, far more sophisticated record than *Ziggy Stardust*. But this 40th-anniversary remaster certainly opens up some new crevices in the sound, allowing small production details to shine through like never before: the little violin-eddies at the end of "Five Years", the razor-edge rimshots on "Soul Love", and, on "Starman", "Ziggy Stardust" and most others, the richly textured doubling of Bowie's acoustic guitars with Mick Ronson's phlegmatic Les Paul.

And yet the clean-up serves also to accentuate the slightly clinical nature of *Ziggy Stardust*. It's an experimental record, in the sense that Bowie was trying out an unknown formula – a concept album that almost, but not quite, tells a story; a tale of a space-age future rock group that sometimes sounds like a survival from the days of rock 'n'roll. The opening two tracks are decidedly undynamic: "Five Years" is a plodder, a dejected yelp from a disaffected hipster who's just discovered apocalypse is round the corner. "Soul Love", which paints a panorama of hippy indolence, is unbearably slow. Which makes the cojones-grabbing entrance of "Moonage Daydream" that much more powerful: something freaky starts to flicker at the mirror's edge, a track that seems worthy of Ziggy's off-world provenance.

This is where the album picks up the slack, although Woody Woodmansey's drums curiously lack presence, a drawback even this master hasn't been able to fix. Bowie's vocal performances are unusually passionless, too, apart from "Suffragette City"'s pumped-up hedonism and the bawling drama of "Rock'n'Roll Suicide".

The real wonder, in retrospect, is how Bowie got away with it. After all, *Ziggy Stardust* makes out it's a concept album but leaves you to infer a 'story' from a song sequence with plenty of gaps; and he never quite seems to work out if he IS Ziggy on record, or if he's merely telling Ziggy's story from multiple perspectives. But that's what makes *Ziggy Stardust* what it is: with The Beatles gone, it's the first self-conscious pop star album – a record about fame, about rock's messianic potential and its always-threatening end (you could read the "*five years, that's all we got*" scenario as a metaphor for the truncated lifespan of the average pop idol). As Bowie's subsequent path showed, the key to rock god immortality was to become a shapeshifting deity, perpetuating himself through self-transformation.

Q&A

Ken Scott, producer

Ziggy Stardust obviously marked a turning point for Bowie – how clear was that during the recording?
It wasn't clear at all. It's still not to me. Listening now I can almost see *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy* being a double album. They were recorded so close together. "Queen Bitch" would fit in with anything on *Ziggy*. No concept was discussed. The only thing said was that the album was going to be more rock'n'roll.

How involved were the rest of the group in the way it sounded?
It was a team effort. We all had input. It wouldn't have been what it was without Ronno's playing and orchestral arrangements, but it wouldn't have been what it was/is without any of the team.

Were there any particular difficulties, or special high points, while recording this album?
There were no difficulties. As far as highlights go, the whole thing. Every time David did one of his one-take master vocal performances or Ronno went down and did exactly what was needed without any prior discussion. I guess, as we're still discussing it 40 years on, it worked.

INTERVIEW: ROB YOUNG

REX FEATURES

KALEIDOSCOPE

Further Reflections: The Complete Kaleidoscope 1967-1969

GRAPEFRUIT

7/10

Heady, intoxicating '60s Britpop

Bringing together Kaleidoscope's two Fontana albums, *Tangerine Dream* and *Faintly Blowing*, plus all five of the group's singles, this is the first time their entire output has come under one roof. *Further Reflections* brilliantly embodies all that's good and bad about late '60s British psych. It presents an evocative mix of the sunny, wistful, folksy pop that characterised *Tangerine Dream*, offset by the more experimental *Faintly Blowing* which epitomises the era's subsequent descent into excess, notably on the lengthy "Music". This is built round clattering drums, an oppressively phased looping riff and the slowed-down sound of a spinning coin, over which the group intones the mantra, "*Life goes on*". By contrast, the poppier *Tangerine Dream* was drenched in fey whimsicality. The wide-eyed, fairytale narrative "The Sky Children" and early-Floyd-like "Dive Into Yesterday" are prime examples of flower pop, while the eerier "Flight From Ashiya", like much of the album, was indebted to The Bee Gees' wonderful period piece, *Horizontal*. Kaleidoscope pilfered only from the best, a proficient, well-intentioned group that never made the big time. As Fairfield Parlour, they switched to Fontana's celebrated off-shoot label Vertigo, but suffered the same fate.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

MEDICINE

Box Set

CAPTURED TRACKS

6/10

Boxed retrospective from lost LA dream-poppers

Formed in 1991, Brad Laner's Medicine signed to both Rick Rubin's American Recordings and the US arm of Creation Records, and even appeared in cameo in '90s goth flick *The Crow*. Despite this, commercial success would elude them, which helpfully makes them eligible for New York label Captured Tracks' archive-dredging Shoegaze Archives imprint. This hefty box draws together their first two albums and their "Sounds Of Medicine" EP across 10 sides of vinyl. Best is 1992's *Shot Forth Self Living*, which kicks off with the scorching, needle-sharp guitar feedback of "One More", gradually takes on looping drum and languorous bass jamming, and finally ends, eight blissful minutes later, Laner cooing "*one more kiss/then we're history*". Shrill, caustic noise and blissful drift was the Medicine way, and the sound would attract some like-minded souls such as Billy Corgan, who would come onboard to remix "She Knows Everything" for the "Sounds Of Medicine" EP, adding a Jimmy Chamberlain drum pattern to Laner's processed guitar.

EXTRAS: "Sounds Of Medicine" is brought up to album length with the addition of two live tracks, "The Pink" and "Lime 6". In addition to the three remastered albums is a live C90 cassette collecting performances in the US and UK.

7/10

LOUIS PATTISON

BUDDY MILLER

Your Love And Other Lies/ Poison Love (reissues, 1995,1997)

FLOATING WORD

8/10

Early outings for much respected hired hand

Sideman duties for Emmylou Harris and, in more recent times, Robert Plant have earned Miller plaudits, prompting this joint reissue of his first two solo efforts, from 1995 and '97, respectively. Famous friends, including earlier duet partner Jim Lauderdale, Dan Penn, Lucinda Williams and the aforementioned Harris lend a hand on *Your Love...*, a punchy collection of country stompers that hark back to '60s honky-tonk but with the contemporary production sheen of, say, Dwight Yoakam and Steve Earle.

Williams' laconic wail blends effortlessly with Miller's more plaintive country yearn on "You Wrecked Up My Heart" (like most originals here, written by Buddy and his wife Julie Miller), "I'm Pretending" echoes with George Jones heartache, and there's a pleasingly atmospheric take on Tom T Hall's "That's How I Got To Memphis". *Poison Love* is a more gritty outing, from the rockabilly strut of the opening "Nothing Can Stop Me" to the barn dance hoedown of the title track, from the tear-stained shuffle of "Love In The Ruins" to the soul waltz of Otis Redding's "That's How Strong My Love Is". Stellar modern country with a sense of history, played with great panache.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

STEVE LACY

The Sun

Avignon And After – 1 (reissue, 1974)

EMANEM

7/10

Amazing discs of US sax man at one of his peaks

Fierce, uncompromising socio-political polemic fuels the music on *The Sun*, which bundles together cuts from '67 to '73, initially finding their way to disc on '79's *Crops & The Woe* and 2000's *Sideways*. By this time, Lacy and vocalist/cellist Irene Aebi were setting R Buckminster Fuller and Lao Tzu texts to a kind of anti-Vietnam War 'jazz in opposition' that feels like a precursor to Henry Cow – Aebi's voice now reminds of Dagmar Krause. But Lacy was also pushing his instrument and his collaborators, with *The Sun* featuring exhilarating improv between Lacy and electronics pioneer Richard Teitelbaum. *Avignon And After – 1* is an expanded reissue of Lacy's 1974 sax set, *Solo – Théâtre du Chene Noir*. Significant not only for documenting Lacy's first solo concerts but also for launching English free improv imprint Emanem, this is Lacy at his most questing, probing the limits of his instrument, and in material from a session from Berlin, pushing things so far out there, you can barely picture the saxophone in his hands.

8/10

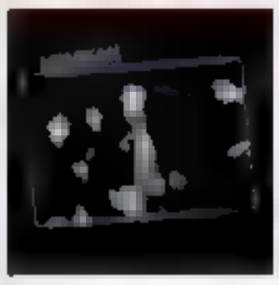
EXTRAS: Four unreleased tracks on *The Sun*; *Avignon And After* is loaded up with nine extra solo cuts, recorded in Avignon and Berlin.

7/10

JON DALE

HOW TO BUY... EUROPEAN NEW WAVE

Minor masterpieces of the genre



IVY GREEN

Ivy Green POGO/ WARNER BROTHERS 1978

Provincial hicks from the Netherlands – singer Tim Mullens even had a moustache – but their first LP, featuring the brilliant "I'm Sure We're Gonna Make It", crackles with Adverts-ish intensity.

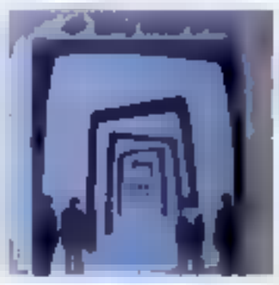
7/10

THE KIDS

The Kids PHILIPS 1978

Boasting "Do You Love The Nazis", "Bloody Belgium" and their defining moment, "Fascist Cops", the sensational nihilism by numbers here mitigates a later drift into skinny tie territory.

7/10



RUDE KIDS

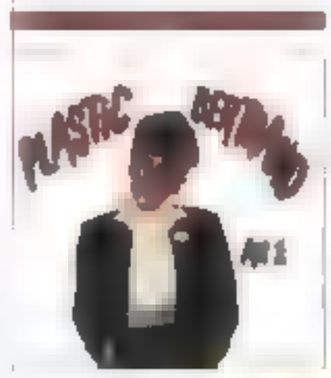
Safe Society

POLYDOR 1979

Thrashy and trashy debut from the Stockholm tearaways – the two-chord assault on local Teds, "Raggare Is A Bunch Of Motherfuckers", is their syntax-mangling masterpiece.

7/10

JIM WIRTH



PLASTIC BERTRAND

An 1

HOT SHOT

8/10

Belgian punker's year one masterpiece

In 2010, the former Roger Jouret admitted that he did not sing on Plastic Bertrand's worldwide punk smash "Ça Plane Pour Moi". The future Eurovision hopeful's later disputes with serial pop chancer Lou Deprijck, who produced, co-wrote and performed his biggest hit, provide an odd backdrop to *An 1*, but regardless of who did what, their debut album is an extraordinary piece of work. Iggy And The Stooges repackaged by Hanna-Barbera, it is a barrage of dumbed-down bubblegum pop with words seemingly flung together in a fit of Franglais rapture. Opener "Le Petit Tortillard" (the little commuter train) sets the delirious pace, with the likes of "Pognon Pognon" (money money), "Pogo Pogo", "Dance Dance" and Wha! Wha!" (woof! woof!) making "Ça Plane Pour Moi" sound like Kierkegaard. The follow-up to that hit single, "Sha-La-La-La-Lee", failed to make a massive impression, but The Small Faces' 1966 original sounds lame and pedestrian by comparison. And that's *An 1*'s appeal: by design or by dead-eyed accident, its absurd reductive approach achieves punk's stated intent of making all that went before sound convoluted, bloated and slow.

EXTRAS: An instrumental and a remix of that big hit. Quintessentially inessential.

5/10

JIM WIRTH

TOM RUSSELL

The Rose Of The San Joaquin/The Man From God Knows Where

RETROWORLD

8/10

Double reissue of classic 1990s Americana

Russell has defined himself as "an outsider, folk art, roots-based minstrel", which just about works as a career summary, though it doesn't mention his degree in criminology or his book of letters from Charles Bukowski. Musically, Russell falls between stools, being capable of folk, country and borderland ballads, all of which are in evidence on his fine 1995 album, produced by Dave Alvin and Greg Leisz. At his most literary – on the Biblical ballad "The Sky Above, The Mud Below" – there are clear parallels to the poetic storytelling of Guy Clark, who might also appreciate the way he compares his old Martin guitar to a lover in "What Do You Want?". But Russell is equally adept with a traditional country strum like "Somebody's Husband, Somebody's Son" while the frisky "Out In California" – in which the narrator gloomily imagines his ex taking off her skirt – also contains a dash of barroom existentialism: "*If a man keeps running, he'll run right into himself.*" *The Man From God Knows Where* is an extraordinary song-cycle from 1999, mixing autobiographical detail into the story of the American West, with contributions from Iris DeMent, Dave Van Ronk and Dolores Keane.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR McKAY

SILVER JEWS

Early Times 1990-1

DRAG CITY

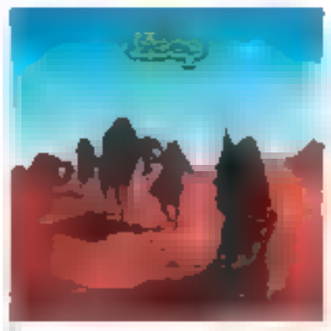
7/10

Early steps by poet and Pavement pal

These days, we know David Berman's Silver Jews as a literate Americana band. At the beginning of the 1990s, however, they were situated somewhere else entirely, operating at low fidelity, and helping to define the off-kilter and lyrically sideways aesthetic which at that time made up a lot of college-derived underground music from America. *Early Times* (an album that compiles the band's first two releases, *Dime Map Of The Reef* and *The Arizona Record*) is duly, a bit impenetrable to the uninitiated, comprising boombox recordings of the band's first steps in sub-Velvets clanking. So why persevere? That would be down ■ the comically anthemic "Canada", the Stonesy "SVM FT TROOPS" and particularly, the beautiful "Secret Knowledge Of Backroads", covered by Pavement on a Peel session. Ah, Pavement. A blessing and a curse to Berman, it was his fortune to be a pal of Steve Malkmus at the University Of Virginia and it is with him and Pavement percussionist Bob Nastanovich (who appear pseudonymously as "Hazel Figurine" and "Bobby N", respectively) that he made these first steps. Berman never wanted to be thought of as a Pavement side-project (the Jews predate Pavement), but however you arrive here, these recordings retain a twisted, historical charm.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



SLEEP

Dopesmoker (reissue, 2003)

SOUTHERN LORD

9/10

Stoner metal's foundation stone, remastered and repackaged

For a record originally deemed unmarketable by the label that furnished its recording, *Dopesmoker* has undergone an impressive number of issues since, with four releases (including a 1999 bootleg, *Jerusalem*) appearing since the record's recording in 1996. Still, it is easy to see why London Records got cold feet. A single, unbroken (on CD, at least) 63-minute track that found this San Jose trio expanding Black Sabbath's weed anthem "Sweet Leaf" to and beyond its logical conclusion, *Dopesmoker* is a sort of hymn to holy intoxication, bassist/vocalist Al Cisneros telling the tale of a caravan of "*weed priests*" on a stoner pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It is a gloriously silly enterprise, the first lyric – Cisneros' growl-chanted "*Drop out of life with bong in hand*" – coming only after eight minutes of mountainous riffing. Yet the group's commitment and almost minimalistic sense of repetition resulting in a metal long-player of unrivalled scope. It would be Sleep's swansong, with Cisneros and drummer Chris Hakius forming Om and guitarist Matt Pike the more orthodox High On Fire.

EXTRAS: This long-awaited "official" reissue features a full remaster job, an 11-minute live version of "Holy Mountain", plus new artwork by Arik Roper.

LOUIS PATTISON

THE SEARCHERS

Hearts In Their Eyes – Celebrating 50 Years Of Harmony And Jangle

UNIVERSAL

7/10

The Mersey pioneers finally get full boxset respect

Among the Merseybeat hordes, The Searchers stood out. No moptops, their sound was likewise tidy, all gliding vocal harmonies and neatly chopped Rickenbacker, and while their R'n'B roster was familiar (Coasters, Drifters) they didn't scream or shout. They found hits in unusual covers like "Needles And Pins" and "When You Walk In The Room" and on the sighing "What Have They Done To The Rain" originated the 12-string chime that was a template for The Byrds' folk-rock. The Searchers' American success was one reason Sire Records signed them in 1979 for a laudable but failed attempt at the new wave market. This 4CD set spans their entire career, from earliest demos through an impressive run of hits that also included "Ain't Gonna Kiss Ya" and "Don't Throw Your Love Away", to the two Sire powerpop albums. As liner notes by Jon Savage and Bob Stanley make clear, they were overworked and mismanaged (much like Pye labelmates The Kinks) and undone by poor self-written material, but at least now they are out of limbo and have due honour.

EXTRAS: Early demos from Liverpool's Iron Door, cuts from Hamburg's Star-Club, solo works by Tony Jackson and Chris Curtis.

6/10

NEIL SPENCER

➤ **Tom Russell's work is hard to categorise, but the term "cowboy noir" just about catches the sense of a writer born on Hope Street in downtown LA, a place he would later recognise from the novels of Raymond Chandler. He only turned to songwriting after a teaching stint in Nigeria during the Biafran War put him off academia. Russell admired Charles Bukowski for his honest portrayal of working-class life, finding him "hardcore, and hip, and funny", and corresponded with him for several years after a chance meeting. Bukowski's letters were sporadic. "Sometimes he wouldn't even remember who I was," Russell told one interviewer. Their correspondence was worked into an audio-documentary, *Hotwalker*, in 2005, narrated by a circus midget. Russell collected the letters in a book, *Tough Company*, and hailed the writer in his song "Requiem" as "*a post office worker, crank, outsider, drunk, American and poet, [an] authentic voice in the wasteland.*"**

ALASTAIR McKAY

SUGAR

Copper Blue (reissue, 1992)

EDSEL

8/10

Bob Mould at his belligerent best

After a period of solo introspection following the implosion of Hüsker Dü, Bob Mould chose a good time to form a new power trio. Post-*Nevermind*, angsty men with loud guitars were the order of the day, and there were few louder or angstier than Mould. *Copper Blue* combined Hüsker Dü's passionate intensity with a new, steely pop resolve; released on label-of-the-moment Creation, it duly stole into the UK Top 10 in September 1992.

From the serpentine growl of "A Good Idea" to breakneck Byrds tribute "If I Can't Change Your Mind", this is a terrific album that took full advantage of the brief window when noisy, visceral rock songs about disillusionment and death – albeit ones with sparkling tunes – could become radio-slaying hits. Also re-released this month are *Copper Blue*'s splenetic companion piece *Beaster*, plus disappointing 1994 swansong *File Under: Easy Listening* and a compilation of Mould's subsequent solo output for Creation.

EXTRAS: Disc One is filled out by contemporaneous B-sides and session tracks, including bassist David Barbe's finest moment, "Where Diamonds Are Halos". Disc Two contains a blistering 15-song live set, recorded at Chicago's Cabaret Metro in July 1992. Disc Three is a DVD of promo videos and TV spots.

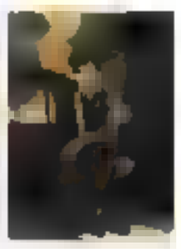
SAM RICHARDS

VAN DYKE PARKS

Song Cycle (1967) Discover America (1972) Clang Of The Yankee Reaper (1975)

BELLA UNION

The vanguard's first three LPs are difficult but peerless, *says Alastair McKay*



7/10

9/10

6/10

VAN DYKE PARKS is pop's weirdest straight guy. Or, just as plausibly, he is rock's straightest weird guy. Whether the foreground of his reputation is dominated by his oddness or his ordinariness depends on who is holding the binoculars. To Mike Love of The Beach Boys, listening to the lyrics penned for *SMiLE*, Parks might represent the embodiment of kooky indulgence. There is a case for that. (The prosecution will now hear a recording of Brian Wilson singing "Vega-Tables".) But listen to Parks now, with a clearer understanding of the context of his work, and it's plain that his primary motivation has been to celebrate common decency.

In truth, Parks has always been misunderstood, and the incomprehension which greeted his debut in 1967 clouded his reputation. Warner Brothers signed Parks in the belief that he might bring with him the secrets of Brian Wilson's genius. Over time, he delivered, though his success came as a producer, midwifing the careers of Randy Newman and Ry Cooder, among others.

But, thanks to the Warners publicist who took out a trade ad, boasting that the company had "lost $35,509 on 'the album of the year' (dammit)", *Song Cycle* was seen as an expensive folly, albeit one worth revisiting (it inspired Joanna Newsom's *Ys*). Parks modestly suggests that it's a record on which he made every possible mistake.

It's true that *Song Cycle* does not go out of its way to accommodate the listener. It flits between styles. Its songs are abstruse affairs, masking the intentions of their author. In a way, it's a protest record, but the iron fist of Parks' anger is gloved in velvety sonic experiments, as he and producer Lenny Waronker explore eight-track recording.

It offers a kaleidoscopic vision of American popular music, drifting in and out of focus, like show tunes wafting from a passing riverboat. A snippet of Steve Young playing a gospel country tune crashes into the theatrical melancholy of "Vine Street", a Randy Newman composition in Brechtian dungarees; then you get "Palm Desert", which has a chorus, almost, and some birdsong, while musing lyrically about "*the very old search for the truth within the bounds of toxicity*". It feels, ■ times, like California, reimagined as a musical, but without hackneyed references to girls or surf. Instead, on "Widow's Walk", Park addresses civil strife, while the beautiful instrumental, "Colours", employs Caribbean flavours, to point forward to the record that Parks considers his best, 1972's *Discover America*.

On paper, *Discover America* is a calypso record, with Parks remodelling traditional songs in a celebration of Trinidadian culture. It does that, and it sounds joyous. But it's not all sunlight. Hidden behind the breezy rhythms, he's also making a sly comment about post-colonial Trinidad and, by implication, race relations in the US. That sounds grim, but it's largely playful, and sometimes funny (see "G-Man Hoover", which mocks the fabled FBI chief). Little Feat provide the salty atmospherics on "FDR In Trinidad", and the gangster theme is continued on the lazy, tropical "John Jones". Ry Cooder is an obvious point of reference, but it's not much of a stretch to suggest that The Clash colonised this territory a decade later in their pan-global phase (though Parks is slower to anger, and has superior table manners).

The calypso experiment was continued on the 1975's *Clang Of The Yankee Reaper*, which has its moments (the exuberant "Tribute To Spree"), while sounding more frivolous, and dated in a way the first two albums do not. On *Song Cycle* and *Discover America*, Parks looked back to face the future, and made music that still sounds mysterious. It's not timeless, exactly, but neither is it dated. Perhaps it still intrigues because it has almost nothing to do with rock.

You might call it beat, without the jazz; or Americana, without the tractors.

ESSENTIAL None.

GETTY

Q&A

Van Dyke Parks

Song Cycle still seems mysterious: what was it about?
From June 1963, when I got my first job, arranging "The Bare Necessities" - that was to pay for the black suit and the airplane ticket to my brother's funeral. That is before John Kennedy got his, and then Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. In fact, we were in a psychological collapse, Americans, every damn one of us!

So when you listen to *Song Cycle*, you get that sense of catastrophe. I talk about my father's war trunk. I say, "*God send your son home safe to you*". I use that squaresville expression for my father, who had lost his son, my brother. So it was an expensive record for me. Warner Brothers said it was expensive for them – they were lying through their teeth.

***Discover America* has an interesting mood – both happy and sad.**
You can feel that there is an underlying contentment, but beyond that there is urgency. Those are the writings of Trinidadian authors and they show great authorial command. I liked the troubadour: music that is the truth, the ballad, and the news that's fit to sing. I saw that in Phil Ochs' work; it somehow captured an era.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR McKAY

The Specialist

Everything But The Girl

► TRACEY THORN AND Ben Watt met on their first day at Hull University in 1981, after Watt – a fan of Thorn's skeletal post-punk trio Marine Girls – put out a message for her over the tannoy in the student bar. It was the beginning of a lifelong relationship that has since born three children and ten albums, the first four of which are reissued this month with attendant B-sides and session tracks.

Naming themselves Everything But The Girl after the slogan of a Hull furniture shop, the duo's 1984 debut **Eden** (8/10) was an earnest attempt to pool their two sets of influences. Thorn brought the careworn croon and acoustic pop sensibility she'd honed on her maudlin 1982 solo debut, *A Distant Shore*. Watt, the son of '50s bandleader Tommy Watt, channelled the experience of working with Robert Wyatt and jazz saxophonist Peter King into his deft arrangements. The result was a pensive but beautifully poised jazz-pop fusion, tending towards bossa nova at times – part Nick Drake, part Astrud Gilberto.

Eden pulled Everything But The Girl toward London's burgeoning jazz-pop milieu – the pair both guested on The Style Council's *Café Bleu* – but follow-up album **Love Not Money** (7/10) betrayed an uneasiness with that scene's taste for champagne socialism. It abandoned *Eden*'s more rococo jazzy stylings for a sturdy provincial jangle and lyrics about the struggle to square romantic ideals with financial realities in Thatcher's Britain (*"promises never paid for shoes"*). Some of EBTG's most undervalued moments are here, along with the occasional clunker.

1986's **Baby, The Stars Shine Bright** (5/10) flip-flopped again, shelving the politics and the guitars in favour of schmaltzy orchestral arrangements that do Thorn's increasingly savvy songwriting no great favours. Both "Cross My Heart" and "Little Hitler" are genuinely more enjoyable in their sketchy home demo incarnations.

Finally, 1988's **Idlewild** (6/10) is the one album from this batch that sounds helplessly of its time, thanks to an excessive use of electric piano and vacuum-packed percussion. Pleasantly nostalgic in tone, it finds Everything But The Girl drifting into a slick, adult-oriented pop comfort zone where they would remain until jolted back into relevancy by Todd Terry's house remix of "Missing" in 1995. *Idlewild*'s bonus disc does, however, contain the band's biggest hit of the '80s, their undeniably lovely and thankfully electric piano-free version of Danny Whitten's "I Don't Want To Talk About It".

SAM RICHARDS

AMON TOBIN

Amon Tobin

NINJA TUNE

8/10

Bogglingly exhaustive collection from Brazilian sampling/field-recording don

Long-fêted in IDM circles, breakbeat electronicist Amon Tobin is known for his startling inventiveness. Over the past 16 years, Tobin's experimentation has seen him collaborate with the likes of Philip Glass and Ryuichi Sakamoto, won commissions from Hollywood film producers and PlayStation games makers, and prompted him to sample millions of sounds – live insects, an egg whisk and CD pressing machinery included – which he's then reconfigured to his own ends. Tobin's pursuit of the possibilities of sound is reflected in this limited-edition boxset, packaged as a bolt-fastened, mechanical press. Containing six 10-inch records, seven CDs and two DVDs, it's unusual in that most of the tracks are previously unreleased. The volume of remixes (both Tobin's of other artists' tunes and theirs of his), rare and live issues is a testament to the producer's prolificacy, but it's not only the heft that impresses. Whether crafting drill'n'bass or micro-house, digitising Angelo Badalamenti or John Carpenter, Tobin's electrickery frequently dazzles. That genre labels fail to accommodate the sweet likes of "Surge" (the Pete Wareham "translation") and the unsettling "Bath Scene (Here Comes The Moon Man)" is another reason to appreciate his bonkers adventurism.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL

TOMPALL & THE GLASER BROTHERS

The Award Winners/Rings & Things

HUX

7/10

Prime cuts from the most underrated of the country Outlaws

Best known in rock circles for co-writing "Streets Of Baltimore" – a song borrowed by Gram Parsons after scoring a hit for Bobby Bare – Tompall Glaser is the most underrated member of the Outlaw country movement. He never fitted in with Nashville, though he made fine records with his brothers Chuck and Jim, and offered a sanctuary to country's left-field talents in the early 1970s at his Hillbilly Central studio. The Glasers had numerous false starts, making a breakthrough in 1966 under the tutelage of producer Jack Clement. The first of these two albums, from 1971, showcases songs published by the Glasers, not least "Me And Bobby McGee", with John Hartford and Randy Scruggs indulging in an almost psychedelic banjo/guitar coda. The real treats are on the 1972 album, which shows why the Glasers deserve to be filed alongside the *Sweetheart*-era Byrds (check the harmonies on "Lovin' You Again", or the murderous country ballad "Delta Lost"). Note also their fine cover of "Phoney World", by the International Submarine Band's Jon Corneal. It has world weariness aplenty, but Doyle Grisham's steel guitar keeps it afloat.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR McKAY

TRONICS

Love Backed By Force

(reissue, 1981)

WHAT'S YOUR RUPTURE?

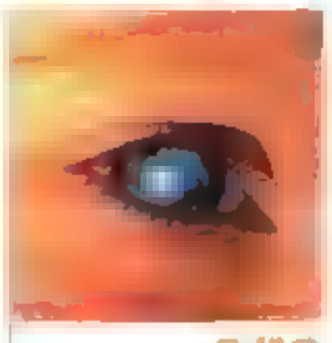
6/10

Deranged outsider art-rock from '81

That the googly-eyed sub-Throbbing Gristle instrumental that opens Tronics' only vinyl album is called "Charlie Manson" possibly says it all; their frontman – here down as Ziro Baby, but also known as Ronnie Git, 'Tony' and latterly Zarjaz – is a man on familiar terms with the septic and the unhinged. Having produced a couple of homemade pubby-punk singles and two cassette-only albums, Zarjaz defined his own creeped-out personal space with *Love Backed By Force*, now resurrected by New York hipsters What's Your Rupture? Backed only by conga-thumping Gaby De Vivienne, this word-of-mouth masterpiece relocates Skip Spence's *Oar* to Earls Court squatland, veering inscrutably from shambly Television Personalities pop ("My Baby's In A Coma" and the extraordinary "TV On In Bed"), through three-wheeler rockabilly ("Spending Time") and Tudor psych ("Ultra Pol", sung in Nadsat, the droog language from *A Clockwork Orange*). Zarjaz later took his 'baroquabilly' style to Creation, and was sighted more recently as a sci-fi glitter rocker, day-glo Louis XIV and laser-eyed Caligula. A fantasist, a visionary, or something inbetween.

EXTRAS: None, but What's Your Rupture? have reissued the equally perverse "Shark Fucks" single, with a compilation of other Tronics material in the offing.

JIM WIRTH



VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Inner Flame: A Tribute To Rainer Ptacek

FIRE

8/10

Engrossing cap-doffer to late Tucson guitarist

The desert rock scene of early '80s Arizona owed as much to Rainer Ptacek as it did his more fêted contemporaries Green On Red and Giant Sand, who he co-founded with good friend Howe Gelb. His solo records were full of spare, haunting songs that distilled the migratory urges of the blues into something altogether more specific, his National steel guitar evoking the mystic allure of the wide-open spaces that surrounded him. By the time of his death from brain cancer in 1997, aged 46, he had a steady stream of famous admirers. Many of them turned out for *The Inner Flame*, initially conceived by Howe and recorded during the last year of Ptacek's life to help fund his crippling medical bills. Now reissued with extras to herald the onset of a major reissue campaign, highlights include Robert Plant and Jimmy Page's unlikely folk-hop version of "Rude World", Madeleine Peyroux's almost hymnal "Life Is Fine" and a clamorous, beat-driven cover of "Losin' Ground", performed by PJ Harvey, John Parish and Eric Drew Feldman.

EXTRAS: Of the five additional tunes, 6/10 Grandaddy's take on "Junkpile" is fabulous, an airy pop song refracted through the wobbly haze of the desert horizon.

ROB HUGHES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Bickershaw Festival 40th Anniversary

OZIT RECORDS

9/10

Eight-disc extravaganza dominated by the Grateful Dead at their cosmic, communitarian finest...

Before Glasto cornered the market, the legendary brand leader in festival mud was Bickershaw, held near Manchester over May 5-7, 1972. Organised by Jeremy Beadle, rain had flooded the site even before a water tank was accidentally emptied into the arena. Salvation eventually came on the third day, when a voice announced, "For all our muddy friends, the Grateful Dead". Inspired by shared adversity, the Dead's famous communitarian spirit rose to the occasion in a four-hour set that ranks as one of the finest they ever played outside San Fran. Much of the material overlaps with the *Europe '72* album, but there are extravagantly cosmic jams around "Dark Star" and "The Other One" (the only times they were played on the tour), some rare, storming Pigpen R'n'B showcases and versions of the likes of "Playing In The Band" and "Jack Straw" as good as you've ever heard. After four discs of the Dead's magnificence in high-quality sound taken direct from the 16-track soundboard, the two discs of amateur audience recordings of fragments from Beefheart, The Kinks, Donovan, and Country Joe are sadly unlistenable.

EXTRAS: Two DVDs, hardback book and the 7/10 biggest box any boxset has ever seen.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

MUDDY WATERS

Mud In Your Ear

WIENERWORLD

6/10

Long lost answer to *Electric Mud* makes it onto CD for the first time

In 1967, Chess Records was trying to persuade Waters to update his sound and appeal to the kind of audience Hendrix and Cream were drawing for their psyched-up blues-rock. Muddy's regular band was dumped and they stuck him in the studio with younger musicians to create the most controversial album of his career, *Electric Mud*. The veteran bluesman not only hated the idea, but was territorially protective of his regular musicians, so was more than happy to moonlight with them when producer Alan Douglas offered the opportunity to make a straight-ahead Chicago blues album without a hated wah-wah pedal or fuzzbox in sight. Muddy's Chess contract meant he had to keep a low profile so he reduced himself to the ranks, playing guitar while his sidemen took the spotlight. It was a mighty band, and with guitarist Luther Johnson taking lead vocals, 'Mojo' Buford wailing on harmonica and Otis Spann on piano, they sound as down and dirty as you would expect. Standouts include the moody six-minute "Remember Me", a gloriously ragged "Evil" and the storming instrumental title track. It's how Waters wanted to be heard.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

COMING NEXT MONTH...

As *Uncut*'s employees toil away in the shadow of the albums mountain, it's hard to think of a new artist who routinely serves up as much pleasure while we work, as **Ty Segall**. After his garage/psych collaboration with White Fence, his forthcoming *Slaughterhouse*, recorded with his live band, is on heavy rotation here, and well worth your attention when it "streets" next month. As is, albeit in the most different kind of way imaginable, the new one by **Dirty Projectors**. It's a complex beast, *Swing Lo Magellan*, but the band's quality singing is the constant light in the more oblique twists and turns taken by Dave Longstreth's band.

Not a month goes by, it seems, without a new album featuring Damon Albarn, a man who can count on a team of A-list collaborators to help express his diverse musical leanings. Next month, **Blur** celebrate their 21st birthday with a few live dates and a 21-disc boxset, offering the band's extant catalogue plus B-sides and oddities – one in fact, called "Sir Elton John's Cock". Hard to cap that, but **Will Oldham** will try, as his reissue campaign continues, bringing us the closing stages of Palace and the birth of his Bonnie "Prince" Billy identity.

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EDWARD SHARPE AND THE MAGNETIC ZEROS

HERE

NEW ALBUM OUT 28TH MAY ON ROUGH TRADE

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Debut Album 'Up From Below' Out Now

Includes the hit single 'Home'

DVD & Blu-ray

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

THIS MONTH: | YELLOW SUBMARINE | RACONTEURS | PINK FLOYD

THE BRIDGE

ARROW FILMS

The latest Scandi-TV import proves the Nordic crime wave hasn't peaked just yet, *says Damien Love*

7/10

JØRGEN JOHANSSON

ANOTHER GRIPPING slab of Nordic noir, *The Bridge* isn't simply the latest import arriving to feed our recent appetite for Scandinavian television. Shot late last year, it's also the first to have been made after the international success of shows like *The Killing*, which, broadcast in Denmark in 2007, took four years to become an overnight sensation in the UK.

Drawing over one million viewers on its BBC Four debut – a bigger audience than *The Killing* – *The Bridge* undoubtedly benefitted from its predecessors' word-of-mouth buzz. But there's more going on than that. A co-production between DR, the Danish broadcaster behind *The Killing*, and Sweden's SVT, house of *Wallander*, the series feels very much a carefully calculated response to the region's recent successes in exporting cop thrillers. You half suspect it was designed more for us tourists than domestic audiences.

The bridge in question is the Øresund Bridge that connects Sweden and Denmark, and the story begins with the discovery of a woman's body at the midway point: meaning cops from both countries must work together. Essentially, what we have is the Scandi-crime equivalent of one of those Spidey-Meets-The-Hulk-style Marvel Comics team-ups.

A self-aware quality permeates proceedings, most pointedly in the figure of the Swedish cop, Saga Norén (Sofia Helin). At first glance, with her absorption in her work and lack of social skills, the character seems practically a goofy pastiche of *The Killing*'s ever-isolated Sarah Lund – until, that is, you realise Saga actually has some high-functioning, Asperger's-like autistic condition.

Joining her from Denmark, and bearing the pastries to prove it, is Martin Rohde (the excellent Kim Bodina, from Nicolas Winding Refn's *Pusher*), an easygoing, shambling Baloo Bear, nursing his own problems. The day before the killing, he had a vasectomy: "My nether regions are tender."

Odd couples don't come much odder, but this is no comedy, and the sparks of warmth in their strange, sideways relationship become the only glimmers of light as things turn grisly and grim. On closer inspection, it turns out the body on the bridge is actually two bodies. Bits of them, anyway: half of it belongs to a Swedish politician; half to a Danish prostitute.

You see, the serial killer, dubbed "The Truth Teller" by the media, has political points to make. The initial crime is only the overture to a vast, messianic mission, supposedly aimed at drawing society's attention to itself, highlighting the plight of the homeless, the vulnerability of the mentally ill, the "failure of immigration policies" and so on.

To a degree, the series deals in the familiar pop socio-political concerns that run through much Nordic noir, the stuff Henning Mankell explores in his Wallander novels and Stieg Larsson kicked in his Millennium Trilogy: beneath the abiding stereotype of the Scandinavian countries as content, liberal havens, something is rotten in Europe's chill northern heart.

Really, though, for all its slow-burning surface gloom and supposed political concerns, *The Bridge*, like *The Killing*, is pure pulp, with a diabolical-mastermind plot that has the relentless forward motion of an old cliff-hanger serial.

For boxset bingers, though, the true attraction is less to do with plot and themes, anyway, than the sheer mood the programme generates as it plunges us back into the crepuscular world we have come to love: nights in the forgotten zones of curious, unfamiliar cityscapes, where the light outdoors seems rubbed in copper and soaked in whisky, and rooms have the tinge of the aquarium or the mortuary.

Extras None.

DAWN OF THE DEAD

CHROME DREAMS

8/10

The San Francisco psych-rock figureheads and their scene chronicled

Despite a clunky commentary, the narrative here speeds along, thanks to an embarrassment of rare clips and insightful interviews, chiefly the Dead's long-time publicist Dennis McNally, keyboardist TC Constanten and Mike Wilhelm from The Charlatans. The overwhelming sense here is that the musicians at the centre of SF's underground could only watch as their idyllic scene disintegrated. One lasting image is of Garcia being told the Dead can't perform at Altamont. "Oh bummer," he declares before fleeing the site.

EXTRAS 5/10 Prankster Ken Babbs performing "Fell In The Crack".

MICK HOUGHTON

THE RACONTEURS

Live At Montreux 2008

EAGLE ROCK

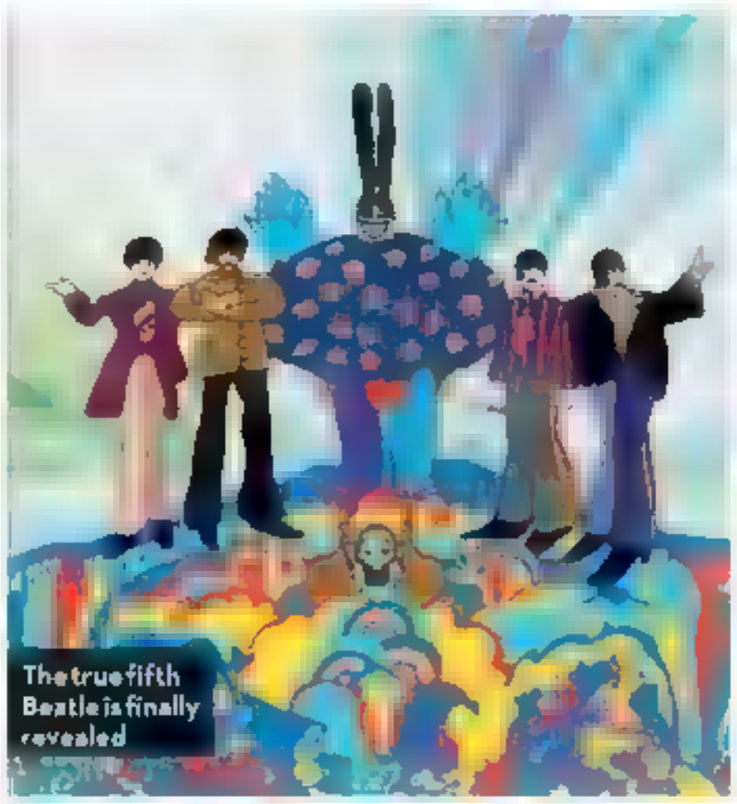
7/10

Tardy, but thrilling, live set from White and co

Tumbling out four years after the supergroup's last album, it's hard to see *Live At Montreux* sparking much excitement. Yet it wouldn't be ridiculous to suggest this no-frills concert film is the definitive Raconteurs document, their live prowess uncovering the delights in their two under-cooked albums. Patrick Keeler's thundering drumming powers the band through turn-on-a-dime segues, leaving Brendan Benson and Jack White free to daub their histrionic yelps and white-hot solos as they please. An epic version of "Blue Veins" is the highlight.

EXTRAS None.

TOM PINNOCK


The true fifth Beatle is finally revealed

YELLOW SUBMARINE

EMI

8/10

Cleaned-up re-release of the Fabs' cartoon classic

Anybody familiar with the short Beatles cartoons produced for US TV (in which George Harrison appeared to have an Indian accent) would have expressed grave doubts that the same company, King Features Syndicate, might have been able to make not just a decent animated Beatle movie, but a brilliant one. And yet this is what happened. Despite a tortuous production and despite (or because of) an almost total lack of Beatles involvement, *Yellow Submarine* turned out to be probably the first great non-Disney animated movie, a modernesque collection of pop songs (the "Eleanor Rigby" sequence is a masterpiece of 1960s melancholia) and a genuinely funny film for children, adults and potheads.

With a script by, among others, Erich "*Love Story*" Segal, voices by, among others, Paul Angelis and Lance Percival, and super animation (mostly dominated by Alan Aldridge), *Yellow Submarine* is a film whose Beatle contribution is solely musical (with great offcuts like "Hey Bulldog" and "It's All Too Much"), yet which encapsulates the wit, optimism and oddness of Summer Of Love Fabs better than the actual Beatles could (it's a lot better than *Magical Mystery Tour*, that's for sure). With a superbly sympathetic George Martin soundtrack and, in the Blue Meanies, some of the perviest screen villains of the 1960s, *Yellow Submarine* is a lot better than it could have been (if we're honest, it's a lot better than *Help!* as well). This new version is cleaned up to perfection and features lots of fun, if brief extras (though none briefer than The Beatles' actual appearance in the movie). It would have been nice to have Martin's soundtrack included as well as the *Songtrack* album, but perhaps Apple are saving that for the next reboot.

EXTRAS 7/10 *Songtrack* CD, *Mod Odyssey* (seven-minute making-of), original trailer, commentary by the producer and the art director Heinz Edelmann, storyboards, interviews with Erich Segal, cast and crew, reproduced animation cels, stickers and a 16-page booklet with an essay by John Lasseter.

DAVID QUANTICK

DEATH ROW

REVOLVER ENTERTAINMENT

8/10

Werner Herzog's further adventures with the doomed

On paper, this companion piece to Herzog's recent documentary, *Into The Abyss*, is grim, culled from interviews with Death Row prisoners, but Herzog fashions a moving, unsettling story about crime and punishment. Rural Texas looks post-apocalyptic under the gaze of Herzog's camera, but the drama is in the director's encounters with condemned prisoners – the testimony of one, Hank Skinner, unfolds like a Spalding Gray monologue, as he fantasises about avocado, lime and tequila; and the case of Joseph Garcia and George Rivas revolves around the (thrilling) deconstruction of a jailbreak.

EXTRAS None.

ALASTAIR McKAY

ROLL OUT THE BARREL: THE BRITISH PUB ON FILM

BFI

9/10

Nostalgic collection of films on the great British institution

Disc one of this fantastic double set is full of sentimental paeans to the inn as centre of community life, and as heritage. *The Friendly Inn* (1958) shows a world where you could punt to a riverside pub on Sunday and find a free table. The tone changes in the '60s: *Guinness For You* (1969) is hip industrial modernism with an electronic Tristram Cary soundtrack. *Henry Cleans Up* (1974) features Pythons Palin and Jones in a comic guide for landlords on pouring a perfect pint. A brilliant, frequently hilarious collection of social history.

EXTRAS None.

ROB YOUNG

PINK FLOYD: THE STORY OF WISH YOU WERE HERE

EAGLE ROCK

8/10

In-depth exploration of 1975 classic

As much an elegy for Syd Barrett as the story of a disconnected band bursting through the post-*Dark Side...* pain barrier, this excellent documentary scores high on access and insight. Engineer Brian Humphries recalls the band shooting air rifles at a dart board – "Concentrated activity was rather diluted," says Gilmour drily – while Waters admits "hating" Roy Harper's vocal on "Have A Cigar". Genial interviews provide further evidence of The Great Thaw, as does Waters' assertion that the album is about "the possibilities of love".

EXTRAS 5/10 In-studio performances by Waters and Gilmour; extended interviews.

GRAEME THOMSON

PAUL SIMON

Under African Skies

RADICAL MEDIA

8/10

Absorbing companion piece to *Graceland*

Joe Berlinger's film follows Simon to South Africa for a reunion of the musicians who made the album. Simon was widely condemned then for flouting sanctions against the apartheid state. A candid Simon ("I thought about writing political songs... but I'm not very good at it") meets such critics as Dali Tambo, of Artists Against Apartheid. In a very different SA, all seem able to perceive forgivable ambiguities in each other. It is ultimately difficult to believe *Graceland* prolonged apartheid by 10 minutes – or that the sum of human happiness would have been swelled if it had never been made.

EXTRAS None.

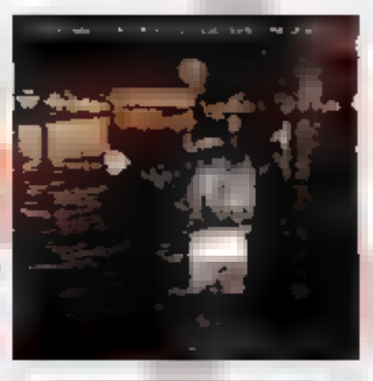
ANDREW MUELLER

Conor Oberst & The Mystic Valley Band

One Of My Kind

11 new songs from Conor Oberst and The Mystic Valley Band plus a documentary DVD capturing a year of touring and the evolution of a group of musicians which started as a quest for a different way of making a record and ended up being a fully realized rock band.

TEAM LOVE CD + DVD / LP + DVD



The dBs

Falling Off The Sky

The dB's are back with a brand new album - the first in 25 years. Their early-'80s classics are now widely revered as altpop landmarks. Falling Off the Sky embodies the same combination of infectious melodic craft, playful sonic experimentalism and barbed lyrical insight. "Falling Off The Sky is the rare comeback effort worthy of its legacy" UNCUT 8/10

[illegible]

Taffy

Caramel Sunset

Caramel Sunset is the debut album from Tokyo four-piece Taffy, who channel the best bits of fuzztone bubblegum pop, shoegaze and psych, with just a dash of Britpop. "Nothing short of splendorous" 8/10 NME.

CLUB AC30 CD & GUITAR 7"

The School

Reading Too Much Into Things Like Everything

Brand new album from Cardiff's THE SCHOOL "Reading Too Much..." is a marvellous collection of utterly perfect pop songs. "Reclaiming C86 territory from Brooklyn bands such as Vivian Girls and the Pains of Being Pure At Heart" THE GUARDIAN

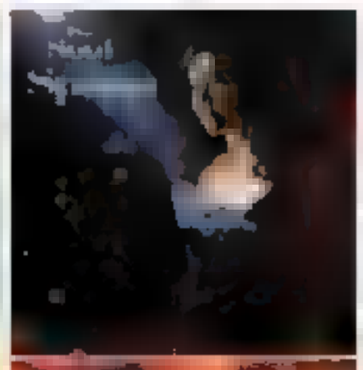
ELEFANT CD / LP

Mademoiselle Nineteen

Mademoiselle Nineteen

Delicious debut album from talented Belgian chanteuse, produced by Benjamin Schoos. A decidedly European album which, in its innocence and fluffiness, unites French culture and the American dream a la Phil Spector and the Tricatel label muses - Valérie Lemercier and Helen Noguerra.

FREAKSVILLE CD



Spain

The Soul Of Spain

In the melancholic slowcore bands of the mid-'90s, Spain were one of the more imaginative: a debonair, blues tinged group from LA led by Josh Haden. Ten years of waiting for new Spain songs and it feels like almost nothing has changed. "The Soul Of Spain" contains the same gorgeous, dreamy, lounge-tinged pop that made their first album a critical and cult favorite.

TYPHOUSE CD / LP

¡Saoco!

The Bomba And Plena Explosion In Puerto Rico

A comprehensive look at the fascinating music of Puerto Rico during the 1950s and 60s. Vampisoul's selection focuses on the rhythms of bomba and plena, island traditions that enjoyed tremendous popularity, enriching the field of tropical music with a distinctive Puerto Rican character.

VAMPISOUL DOUBLE CD / TRIPLE LP

The Primitives

Echoes And Rhymes

THE PRIMITIVES return after long away with this very cool collection of choice covers of '60s Femme Obscuros. From garage to psychedelia, with touches of soul and sunshine pop, these songs are revisited & revamped with love and affection. 4 ★★★★ MOJO

VAMPISOUL DOUBLE CD / TRIPLE LP

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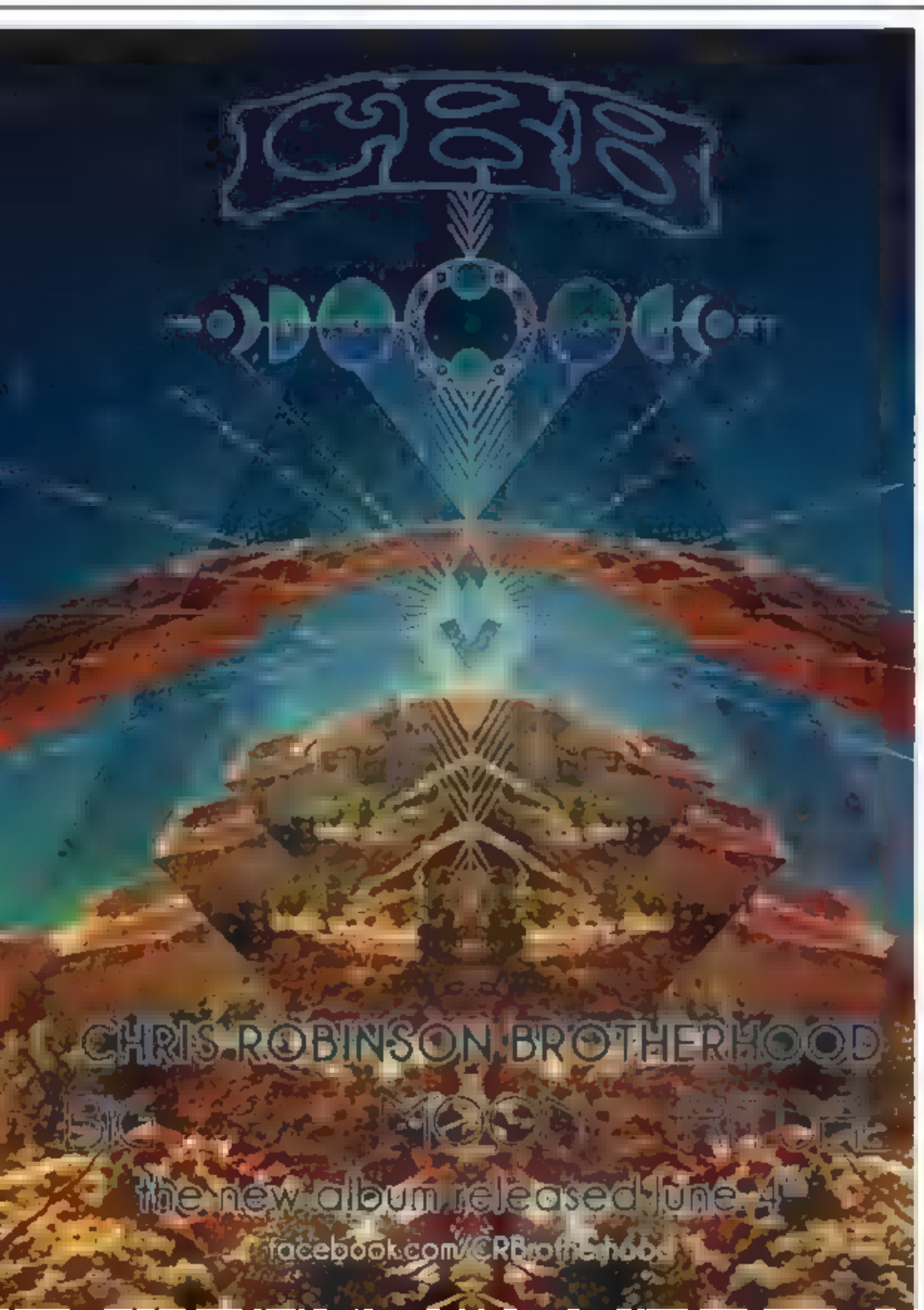
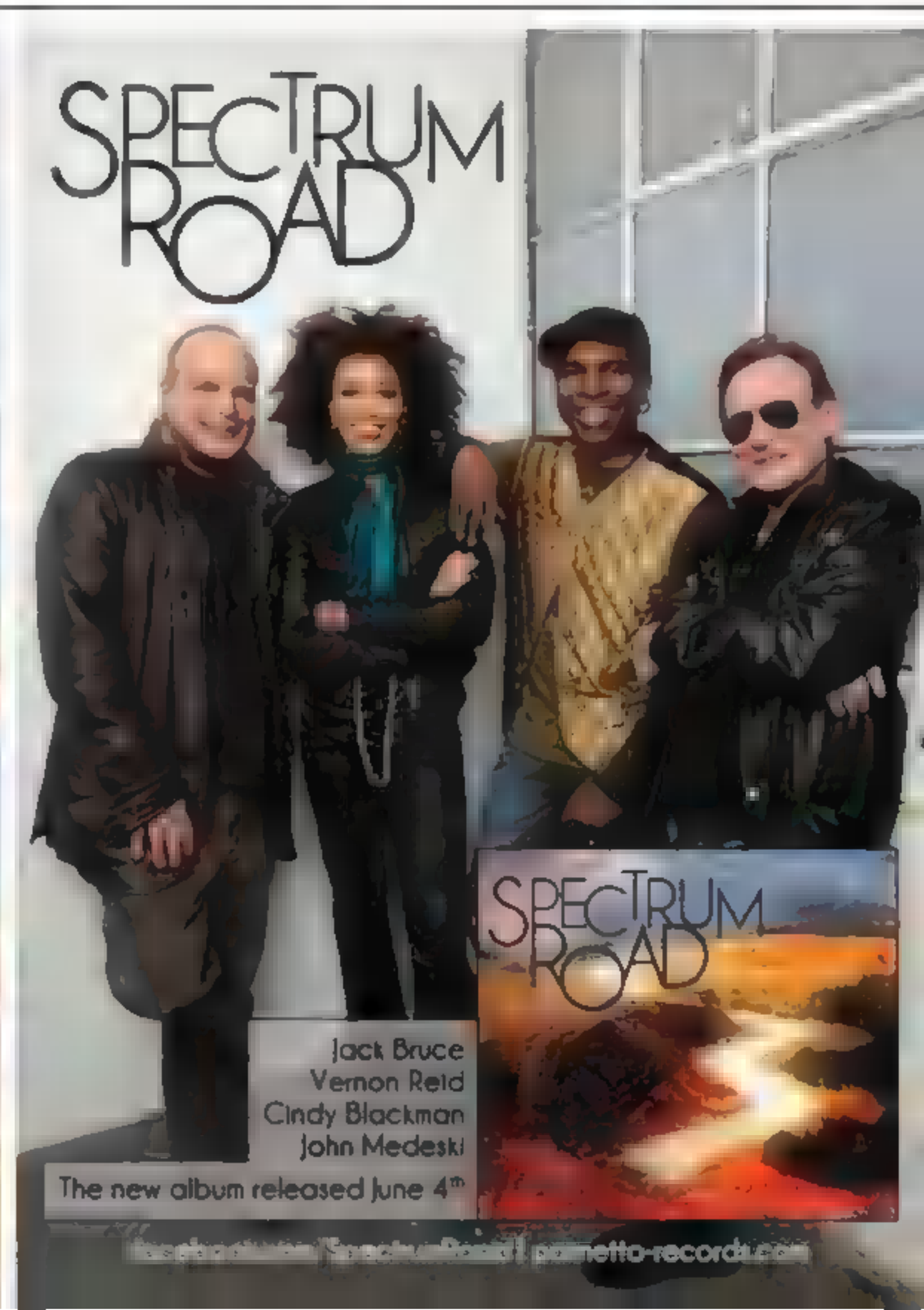




Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

THIS MONTH: A "hip-hop musical", Woody Allen, Johnny Depp, Christopher Walken and something unpleasant involving a chicken drumstick

Matthew McConaughey and Gina Gershon in *Killer Joe*

Ill Manors When Plan B's single "Ill Manors" came out in March, the rapper grandly introduced it as the first step in his new strategy to effect social change in the UK. Released in the build-up to the London mayoral elections, and accompanied by a promo video that drew heavily on news footage from last summer's riots, its message about social alienation felt provocative and timely, though unlikely to have encouraged policy shift at the highest level. Reverting to his real name, Ben Drew now drives his "Ill Manors" agenda up a gear. Shot on the East London council estates where he grew up, Drew had made what he's described as a "hip-hop musical", a series of interconnected stories populated by under-the-radar characters – drug dealers, addicts, prostitutes, teenage gangs. While a message might successfully be conveyed in a three-minute pop song, it's not guaranteed that stretching it out to over two hours will be so effective. At times, certain plot points feel like they've come out of an *EastEnders* Christmas Day special. With added swearing. A pub fire, you say, with a newborn baby trapped in a smoke-filled room? *What would Peggy Mitchell do?*

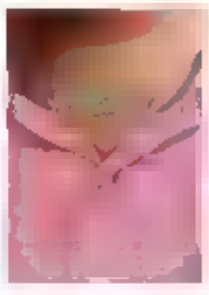
In one of the film's most gruelling sequences, a prostitute is taken from one late-night chicken joint to another and pimped out to the staff, to make back the cost of a mobile phone she's accused of stealing. What this says about disenfranchised urban living, it's difficult to tell; it's too much, too far beyond the socio-realism of Ken Loach or Andrea Arnold. Humanism and optimism are not on display. If there is anyone here who exhibits any redeeming qualities, it's well-meaning if slow-witted Aaron (Riz Ahmed). He, ■ least, provides some kind of moral centre.

➤ Dark Horse One encouraging trend I've noticed this year is the return of some leading lights from 1990s indie cinema: Whit Stillman emerged after ■ 13-year hiatus with *Damsels In Distress*, Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* opened the Cannes Film Festival in May and now here's Todd Solondz, back with his first film since 2009's *Life During Wartime*. *Dark Horse* is perhaps Solondz's most straightforward movie – that's to say, there's no suicide, paedophilia or on-screen masturbation here – but it does at least find the director engaging with his favourite theme: suburban loneliness. Abe (Jordan Gelber) is a man of a certain age and girth, who still lives ■ home with his parents. "My parents need me!" He explains. "Grow up," he's told. "No-one needs you." His mother (Mia Farrow) mollycoddles him. Abe works – not very effectively – for his father's real estate business. As his father is played by Christopher Walken, you sense this is not a healthy set of circumstances. Superficially, at least, this state of affairs seems not to trouble Abe unduly: the stereo in his bright yellow truck (resembling a giant Lego toy) pumps out air-punching, aspirational pop-rock; he appears relentlessly upbeat. At a wedding, Abe meets the highly medicated Miranda (Selma Blair), and you begin ■ suspect that in another universe, this could pan out as a romantic comedy with Seth Rogen or Zach Galifianakis playing the arrested adolescent opposite – God help us – Emily Blunt. Typically, Solondz prefers to grind out agonies for his protagonists – here you'll find car crashes, comas, hepatitis and death. It's the cinematic equivalent of setting fire to ants with a magnifying glass.

➤ Killer Joe There's plenty of nastiness, too, in William Friedkin's terribly funny *Killer Joe*. Typically, from the director of transgressive genre pieces like *The Exorcist* and *Cruising*, one of the first things we see here is Gina Gershon's lower half, naked. "It's a bit distracting, your bush in my face," complains her stepson, Chris (Emile Hirsch). Chris is in debt to some bad dudes because his mother "stole two ounces of coke from me". Dismayed by such inappropriate parenting, Chris, his father (Thomas Haden Church) and stepmother Sharla hire Joe Cooper (Matthew McConaughey), a Texas cop sidelining as a contract killer, to murder

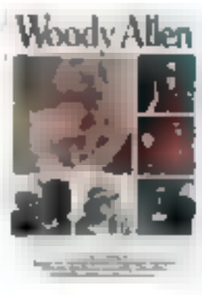
Reviewed this month...

ILL MANORS
Director Ben Drew
Starring Riz Ahmed, Natalie Press
Opens June 6
Certificate 18
7/10



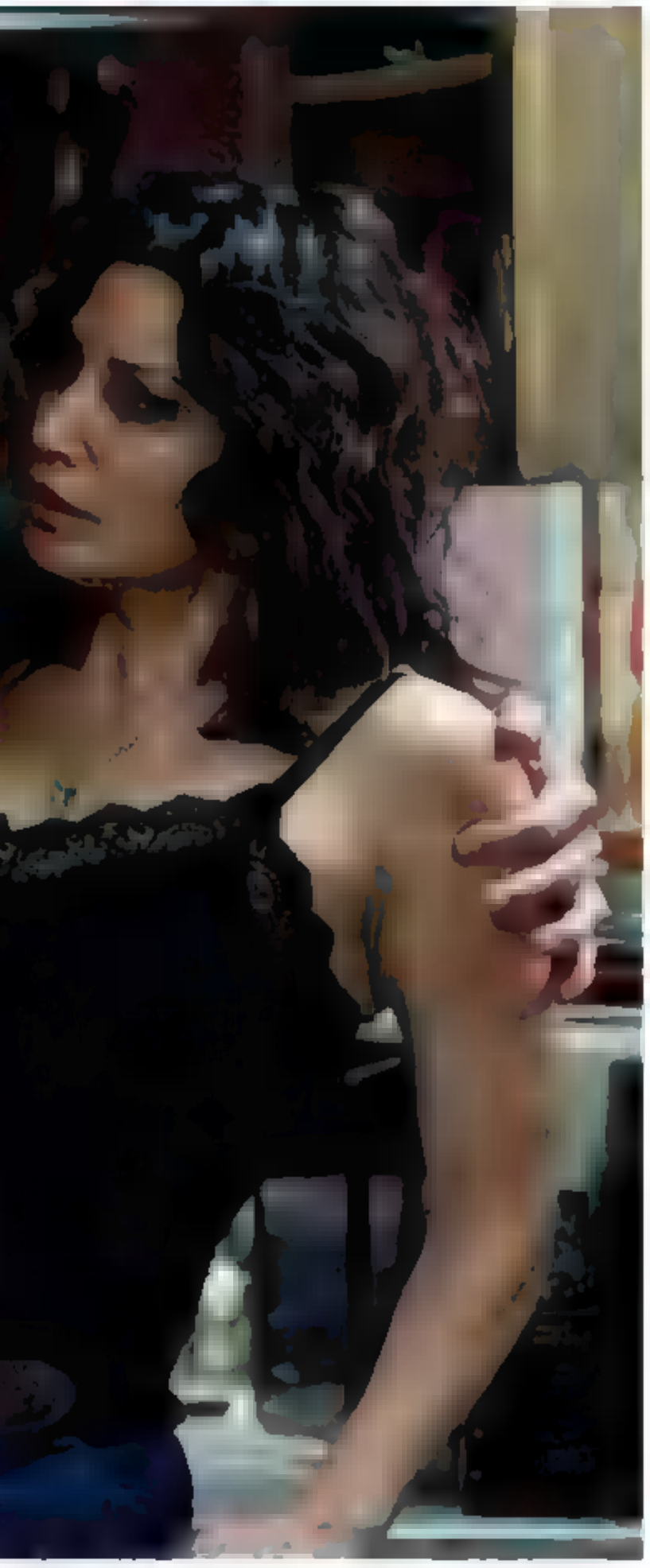
DARK HORSE
Director Todd Solondz
Starring Jordan Gelber, Selma Blair, Christopher Walken
Opens June 29
Certificate 15
6/10

KILLER JOE
Director William Friedkin
Starring Matthew McConaughey, Gina Gershon
Opens June 29
Certificate 18
9/10



WOODY ALLEN: A DOCUM-ENTARY
Director Robert Weide
Starring Woody Allen, Diane Keaton
Opens June 8
Certificate 12A
7/10

DARK SHADOWS
Director Tim Burton
Starring Johnny Depp, Michelle Pfeiffer, Eva Green
Opened May 11
Certificate 12A
4/10



There's plenty of nastiness in William Friedkin's terribly funny Killer Joe... in fact, he doesn't quite know when to stop

Chris' mother for her life insurance policy. Friedkin has never been one for understatement. What could have been a predictable piece of Jim Thompson-style pulp business becomes something much more subversive in Friedkin's hands. Joe wants Chris' barely legal sister, Dottie (Juno Temple), as an advance on his fee. One character is forced to fellate a piece of deep fried chicken. Another has their skull smashed in with a tin of Libby's pumpkin puree. Friedkin doesn't quite know when to stop. This is his second collaboration with playwright Tracy Letts after the similarly out-there *Bug*; the relationship appears to have revived Friedkin. As an actor, Matthew McConaughey has been in danger of getting lost in rom-com's darkest woods – *Ghosts Of Girlfriends Past*, *Failure To Launch*, *How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days*. But with this and last year's unexpectedly brilliant *The Lincoln Lawyer*, he seems to be channeling some terrific Woody Harrelson-style vibes right now.

➤ **Woody Allen: A Documentary** Woody Allen has been the subject of a documentary before: Barbara Kopple's excellent *Wild Man Blues*, which trailed Allen and his band round Europe on tour. Along with some jazz, Kopple managed to capture a few slight but telling insights into Allen's relationship with his wife Soon-Yi, the adopted daughter of his former partner, Mia Farrow. The gist was that Soon-Yi is unfazed and practical, very much the counterpoint to her neurotic husband. Such insights are absent in this documentary from Robert Weide, the executive producer on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and presumably a man who knows funny when he sees it. *Bullets Over Broadway* co-writer Doug McGrath recalls daily phone calls between Allen and his lawyers or the police, where "you'd hear the grisly exchanges" of the lawsuit between Allen and Farrow. But otherwise this is respectful documentary-making about a heritage artist.

The best content finds Allen returning to the house where he was born – "it doesn't look much, and it wasn't" – or visiting the site of the Midwood Movie Theater, a favourite childhood hang-out, now the Brooklyn Eye Surgery Center. Allen shows us his Olympia portable typewriter, bought for $40 when he was 16, on which he's written everything he's done. Meanwhile, Allen's former managers, resembling two of the arthritic Kansas City mob bosses from Scorsese's *Casino*, discuss Woody's transition from gag writer to stand-up and gradual emergence as a filmmaker. From then on, this is very much a straightforward chronological run through Allen's movies, up to and including *Midnight In Paris* – "It's like he's Michael Bay all of a sudden," says Owen Wilson, of Allen's unexpected late-period success. John Cusack, Sean Penn, Larry David and Diane Keaton are among the A-list contributors. Some of the movie off-cuts – particularly from *Sleeper*, that catch Allen in fits of laughter at Keaton's clowning – are more revealing than a dozen celebrity testimonials.

➤ **Dark Shadows** Shoddy stuff from Tim Burton and Johnny Depp. A remake of an arcane 1970s horror/soap, with Depp as a vampire who returns from two centuries of imprisonment to restore his family's fortunes, this shares the same problems familiar from most recent Burton/Depp collaborations: the film looks amazing, the script is fucking atrocious. This is lazy filmmaking, nowhere near as funny as Burton's great supernatural comedy, *Beetlejuice*, or *The Addams Family* and Robert Zemeckis' *Death Becomes Her*, both clear touchstones here. It gets by thanks to a tremendous supporting cast – Michelle Pfeiffer, Eva Green, Jonny Lee Miller and Jackie Earle Haley all doing their best under difficult circumstances – and a heap of goodwill. There is very little given in terms of plausible character motivation; a key romance is on after two characters share three brief scenes together; one character is suddenly revealed to be a werewolf. Alice Cooper turns up and it all begins to feel worryingly like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Across their eight collaborations, Burton and Depp have very much enjoyed romping round the playroom of shared formative influences: RKO horror (*Edward Scissorhands*), B-movies (*Ed Wood*), the more outré end of children's literature (*Sleepy Hollow*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, *Alice In Wonderland*). Here, it feels like the fun has been leeched out of it. Fans of Burton's tropes might at least enjoy the haunted house, high-Gothic romance and a vengeful mob with flaming torches. Later, Christopher Lee will make a cameo.

Also out...

THE ANGEL'S SHARE
OPENS JUNE 1
Alien prequel, directed by Ken Loach. Oh, sorry. Scottish-set drama from Loach, about a young father who tries to stay out of jail. No aliens, then.

PROMETHEUS *(pictured below)*
OPENS JUNE 1
Alien prequel. Ridley Scott does some high-end sci-fi gubbins. Michael Fassbender plays an android. Amazing.

THE TURIN HORSE
OPENS JUNE 1
The latest from moody Hungarian, Béla Tarr. The "heaviness of human existence" explored via a man and his horse.

RED TAILS
OPENS JUNE 6
Thank God! A non-*Star Wars* project from George Lucas. WWII drama, about an African American air force squad.

CASA DE MI PADRE
OPENS JUNE 8
Will Ferrell plays a Mexican out to save his father's ranch from Gael García Bernal's drug baron. *Anchorman 2* can't come soon enough.

A FANTASTIC FEAR OF EVERYTHING
OPENS JUNE 8
What to say? Kula Shaker's Crispian Mills directs Simon Pegg as a children's author who becomes obsessed with murder.

SING YOUR SONG
OPENS JUNE 8
Documentary, about the full and interesting life of singer Harry Belafonte.

COSMOPOLIS
OPENS JUNE 15
Sounds good. David Cronenberg directs from the Don DeLillo novella. R-Patz is a billionaire travelling across Manhattan. By car.

ROCK OF AGES
OPENS JUNE 15
Jukebox musical based around your favourite '80s hair metal hits. Tom Cruise plays a rock star. Discuss.

GLASTONBURY THE MOVIE
OPENS JUNE 29
Re-cut version of the 1996 doc, now with extra Richard Ashcroft.

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Books

BY ALLAN JONES

THIS MONTH: Joni Mitchell's golden age, Patti Smith's idyllic childhood and alligator-wrestling Floridians

MICHELLE MERCER'S **Will You Take Me As I Am** is far from a full-on biography of Joni Mitchell. Instead, she concentrates on that period of Mitchell's career that includes *Blue*, *For The Roses*, *Court And Spark*, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* and her masterpiece, *Hejira*. These are records that for Mercer took autobiographical songwriting to levels of unprecedented candour and more regrettably ushered in an era of confessional singer-songwriters, with whom Mitchell has always resented any association.

The emotional turmoil of her life and her many romantic entanglements – with, among others, Leonard Cohen, Graham Nash, James Taylor and Jackson Browne – provided Mitchell with much of the raw drama of her songs, as she has acknowledged. But she has bristled at the suggestion that these songs are merely entries in a self-involved musical diary. If they were no more than the pouring onto the page of gushing emotions, frank revealings, easily decoded, she has argued, they would not have found such universal resonance and *Blue* itself would not stand so nobly as a disillusioned requiem for the broken promises of the '60s as they turned into the grim '70s that transcends its autobiographical origins.

Mercer is sympathetic to Mitchell's point of view and places her in the literary tradition of poets like Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Elizabeth Bishop and Sylvia Plath, whose departure from the impersonal modernism of TS Eliot she compares with Dylan's rejection of the more doctrinal aspects of the folk movement in favour of a more personal style of songwriting. In Mercer's opinion this was even more radical than Dylan going electric and a liberating inspiration for Mitchell.

Mercer's writing is mostly elegant, its occasional archness far outweighed by the many interesting things she has to say about Mitchell's art and where appropriate the life that has informed it.

Woman of heart and mind: Joni Mitchell, Amsterdam, 1972

➤ George Pelecanos' tough new thriller, **What It Was**, is loosely based on the notorious exploits of Washington DC criminal Raymond "Cadillac" Smith who in the summer of 1972 went on a legendary killing spree. Pelecanos originally worked the character – recast as Red "Fury" Jones – into his 2006 novel, *The Night Gardener*, and here gives him his own book. Red's story is told by Derek Strange, the DC private eye of an earlier series of Pelecanos novels, now in middle age, who as a rookie PI became a player in Red's violent rampage. The Washington of Strange's youth is vividly evoked through the clothes, cars and music of the time and there is welcome relief here from the sanctimony that has sometimes marred Pelecanos' recent writing, which here has the snap and sparkle of the books that made his name, like *The Sweet Forever* and *King Suckerman*.

➤ Patti Smith's **Woolgathering** is an embellished version of a slim memoir originally published in 1992. There's not much to it in terms of simple bulk, less than 80 pages in fact of text, and it is altogether more impressionistic than *Just Kids*, her wonderfully wrought recollection of her early years in New York. But the best parts of it exquisitely evoke an apparently idyllic childhood in rural New Jersey and the "clear, unspeakable joy" of her life then, which was full of mystery and adventure and inquisitive yearning.

➤ Karen Russell's **Swamplandia!** was nominated alongside Denis Johnson's *Train Dreams* and David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King* for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, which the judges refused this year to award after failing to reach a workable consensus. You can to an extent understand their apparent dilemma. Both *Train Dreams* and *The Pale King* are terrific, but the former originally appeared as a short story in *The Paris Review* in 2002 and the latter was unfinished at the time of Foster Wallace's suicide and assembled for publication by his editor.

What the judges had against *Swamplandia!*, I don't know. Maybe they were suspicious of its precocity. Russell is barely 30 and this is her first novel. But she has the dazzling linguistic finesse, finely tuned comic invention and extraordinary descriptive powers of a much more mature writer. She is clearly a rare and frequently breathtaking talent.

The Swamplandia! of the book's title is an outlandish and run-down theme park on a small island off the South Florida coast run by an eccentric clan – Chief Bigtree, his alligator-wrestling wife Hilola and their teenage children, Kiwi, Osceola and Ava, who narrates large parts of an increasingly fantastical story. When Hilola dies suddenly, the park goes to ruin, its future further threatened by the opening of a rival theme park, The World Of Darkness, where Kiwi ends up working in an ill-considered – and often hilarious – attempt to earn enough money to pay off the family's mounting debts.

When the Chief also absconds, Osceola develops a morbid obsession with the spirit world, and elopes with her ghostly boyfriend Louis Thanksgiving into the underworld, pursued by Ava and her sinister ally, The Bird Man. Their nightmare journey through the Everglades is brilliantly evoked, Russell fully demonstrating her uncommon gift for natural description on page after page. The book is not without flaw. Its narrative structure is inclined to lopsidedness as it shifts between Ava and Kiwi's separate adventures and the tying up of the parallel storylines seems increasingly striving. But these are minor faults in an otherwise triumphant debut from an exceptional young writer.

Reviewed this month...

Will You Take Me As I Am: Joni Mitchell's Blue Period
Michelle Mercer
BACKBEAT BOOKS
8/10

What It Was
George Pelecanos
ORION
9/10

Woolgathering
Patti Smith
BLOOMSBURY
8/10

Swamplandia!
Karen Russell
CHATTO & WINDUS
9/10

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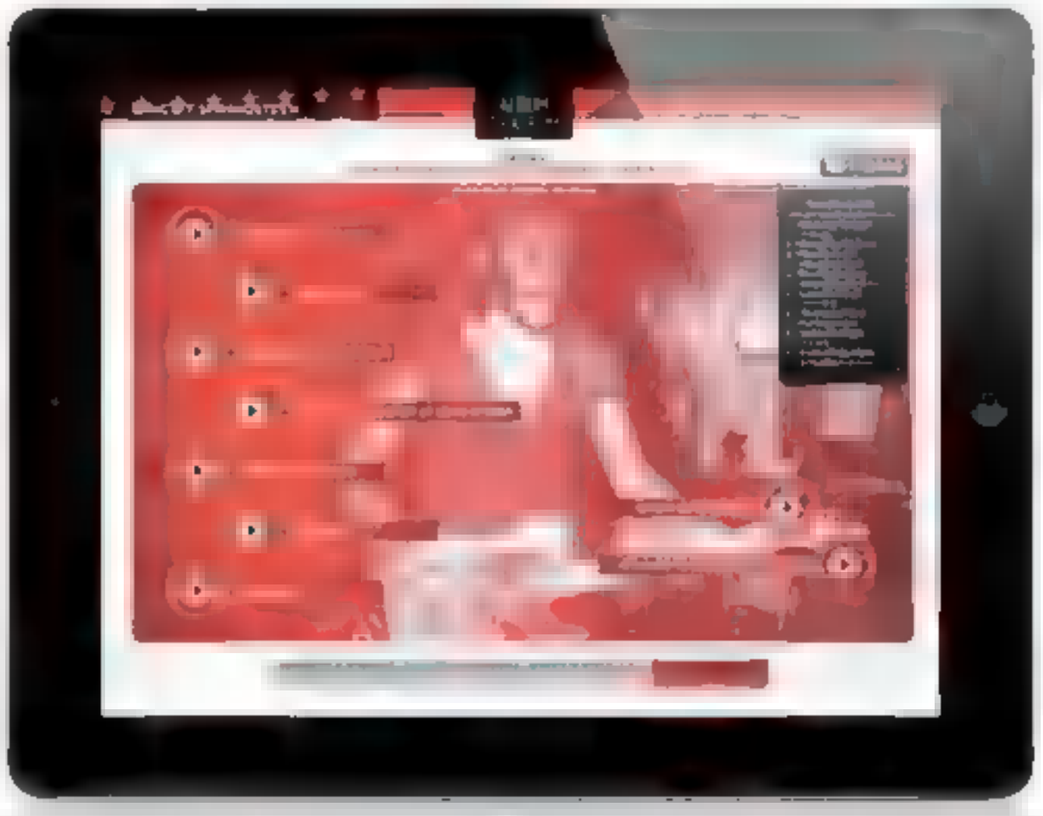

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SETLIST

1 Do It Again
2 Catch A Wave
3 Don't Back Down
4 Surfin' Safari
5 Surfer Girl
6 The Little Girl I Once Knew
7 Wendy
8 Then I Kissed Her
9 You're So Good To Me
10 Why Do Fools Fall In Love
11 When I Grow Up
12 Cotton Fields
13 Be True To Your School
14 Disney Girls
15 Please Let Me Wonder
16 Don't Worry Baby
17 Little Honda
18 Little Deuce Coupe
19 409
20 Shut Down
21 I Get Around

SECOND SET

22 California Dreaming
23 Sloop John B
24 Wouldn't It Be Nice
25 Sail On Sailor
26 Forever
27 Heroes And Villains
28 In My Room
29 All This Is That
30 God Only Knows
31 That's Why God Made The Radio
32 California Girls
33 All Summer Long
34 Help Me, Rhonda
35 Rock'n'Roll Music
36 Do You Wanna Dance
37 Barbara Ann
38 Surfin' USA

ENCORE

39 Kokomo
40 Good Vibrations
41 Fun Fun Fun

MAX BLAU

THE BEACH BOYS

CHASTAIN PARK, ATLANTA, APRIL 28, 2012

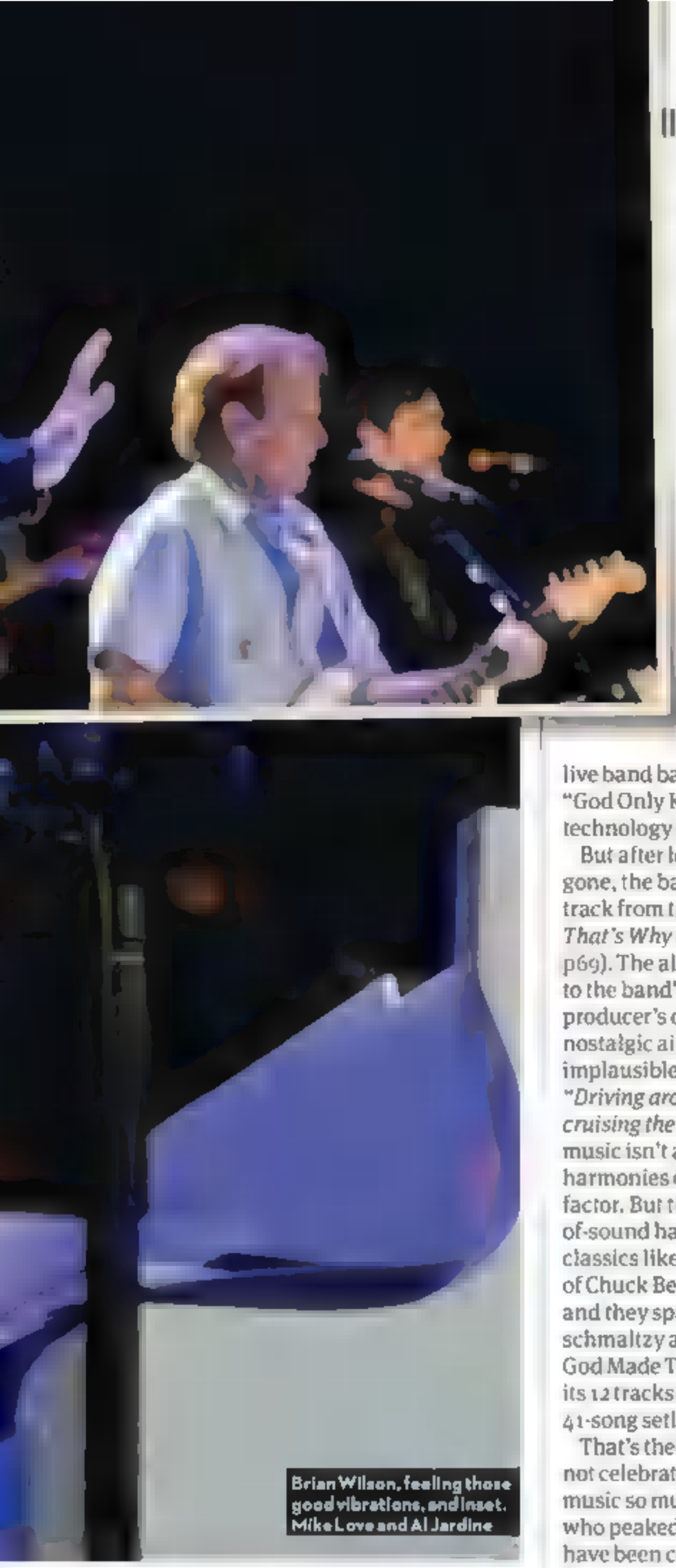
Brian Wilson and Mike Love bury the hatchet for their 50th anniversary. Fun fun fun?

IT IS THE reunion tour that Brian Wilson said would never happen. But time and again over the past four decades, Wilson has been drawn back to The Beach Boys, to the band he founded when he was just 19, who now consist of his cousin Mike Love and original member Al Jardine, plus Bruce Johnston, and David Marks, originally dismissed from the lineup 49 years ago.

This time, Wilson has brought some support in the long-running battle for supremacy between himself and Love: among the 10 other players onstage, there is Darian Sahanaja, the keyboardist and arranger who acted as Wilson's musical director on his recreation of *Smile*, and has marshalled his live band for the past decade.

Once Wilson has taken his seat at a white baby grand, the show begins with "Do It Again", which Wilson has called his best collaboration with Love. Love takes lead vocals, as he will on the majority of the night's songs, but Wilson chimes in for a verse, singing from lyrics on a small prompter atop his piano. Then it's on to "Catch A Wave" and "Surfin' Safari", before Love introduces "the first song cousin Brian wrote" and Wilson sings "Surfer Girl", a song that was born as he hummed the melody in his car riding down Los Angeles' Hawthorne Boulevard five decades ago.

The supporting musicians fill in the gaps both instrumentally and vocally: without brothers Carl and Dennis Wilson to hit the high notes on songs like "Don't Worry Baby", those duties are left to hired guns like Jeffrey Foskett, a staunch falsetto presence in both Brian Wilson and Beach Boys touring bands. Mostly, though, this is Love's show, the only member not



Brian Wilson, feeling those good vibrations, and inset, Mike Love and Al Jardine

rooted to the spot. For such a storied band, there isn't an overabundance of charisma onstage, as they play straight through the hits before a backdrop of a few surfboards and a screen that mainly rotates through photos that could have been compiled by someone's nephew who'd just learned PowerPoint. For "Surfer Girl", there are a few shots of a pretty girl on a beach. For the five car-themed songs that end the first set, there are pictures of a handful of old cars.

But what songs! Has any other band so perfectly captured the American road with such carefree but carefully crafted pop gems? "Little Honda", "Little Deuce Coupe", "409", "Shut Down", and "I Get Around" take the band to a "much-needed" intermission on a high note. If this is going to be a nostalgia trip, it's going to be an exhaustive one, reminding the world that The Beach Boys have had more Top 40 hits than any other American band in history.

They return to the stage after a 20-minute break with a cover of The Mamas & The Papas' "California Dreamin'", Jardine and Wilson sharing vocal duties. Wilson's singing has improved since his initial return to the stage, and he mostly holds key on "Sail On Sailor". But he's at his best on "Heroes And Villains", when 11 other voices join in to harmonise, complementing the bass and keyboard lines. "He thinks of everything and puts it all on one song," says Love, who famously criticised Wilson for that very same quality as his cousin experimented with what Love called "Brian's ego music" on the *Smile* project.

The most poignant moments of the night are a pair of tributes to Brian's two fallen brothers, Dennis and Carl. "Our way of honouring their part in the group's history," Love says, before playing along to a video of Dennis. Carl's video includes photos of the Wilson boys as kids playing in the yard. The live band backs up the 2D Carl singing "God Only Knows" – no hologram technology here.

But after looking back at those who'd gone, the band follows it up with the title track from the band's upcoming album, *That's Why God Made The Radio* (reviewed p69). The album isn't likely to add much to the band's hit total; Wilson sits in the producer's chair and the inevitably nostalgic air is compounded by some implausible sentiments, in the vein of, *"Driving around, living the dream/I'm cruising the town, digging the scene"*. The music isn't any less clichéd, with the harmonies often the only redeeming factor. But the single, a slow-jam with wall-of-sound harmonies, still fits in nicely with classics like "In My Room" and their cover of Chuck Berry's "Rock And Roll Music" and they spare the crowd any of the schmaltzy album tracks; "That's Why God Made The Radio" is the only one of its 12 tracks that makes it onto tonight's 41-song setlist.

That's the feeling of this tour: that we're not celebrating five decades of Beach Boys music so much as the anniversary of a band who peaked creatively 45 years ago and have been coasting since the mid-'70s – like so many of their laidback protagonists, sitting behind the wheel without a care in the world. Songs like "Help Me Rhonda" and "Surfin' USA" are still hugely enjoyable, but it's painful to watch Brian Wilson, one of rock's greatest composers, begrudgingly singing backup on the post-Wilson travesty "Kokomo", the first encore and definitive low point of the evening.

It's followed, though, by the high point, "Good Vibrations", as the 15 people on stage recreate the song in all its studio glory. When the theremin kicks in, all the lacklustre presentation and cheesy nostalgia is forgiven, and the positive feelings continue through the closing "Fun, Fun, Fun", with its triumphant trashcan ending. This is The Beach Boys, after all. And though it was a long time ago, they have earned every victory lap they choose to take.

JOSH JACKSON

FURTHER DATES

➤ The Beach Boys tour intensively through the summer, performing in the US, Europe and Japan – UK dates are yet to be announced, as we go to press

Dave Heumann: a psych-rock Richard Thompson

Arbouretum

CARGO, LONDON, MAY 2, 2012

Heavy plant! The blossoming career of Baltimore's psych-folk-rockers

AS ARBOURETUM MAKE their way through Europe, they are selling a special tour CD of cover songs, whose sources are so canonical as to be almost funny. On *Covered In Leaves*, Dave Heumann's band tackle selections by Dylan, Creedence, John Martyn, Will Oldham and, for a little crate-digging frisson, the Pure Prairie League, as well as the familiar traditional, "She Moved Through The Fair". Two of these – Martyn's "Run Honey Run" and John Fogerty's "Long As I Can See The Light" – make the setlist for this London show, but it's a measure of how skilfully Arbouretum channel classic rock and folk that they sound more or less like Heumann originals. Over the past few years, a simple and brilliant formula has been established: a melding of key influences – Richard Thompson, Crazy Horse, low-end psych – that feels progressive and idiosyncratic while being potently rooted in the past.

Heumann is at the heart of it all, an incantatory folk singer whose fraught, modal guitar solos cut through the raga-rock of his bandmates. This time out, additional heft is provided by Matthew Pierce acting as second martial drummer with his right hand, while he holds down the keyboard drones with his left. A slight change, too, in the quartet's selection of beards; the one sported by bassist Corey Allender is now so prodigious he resembles The Dubliners' Ronnie Drew. Mostly, though, it feels as if Arbouretum are working on minor adjustments to their sound. On this showing, "St Anthony's Fire" (from the recent split album with Hush Arbors, *Aureola*) is the finest crystallisation yet of Heumann's vision; churning, arcane, cosmically inclined. The only caveat, really, is one that blights the most conceptually satisfying of bands – when their sound is so individual and realised, how do they avoid repeating themselves? Perhaps the answer for Arbouretum is to return to the two-guitar lineup of 2009's *Song Of The Pearl* (where Steve Strohmeier played Richard Lloyd to Heumann's Verlaine): becoming looser; to push on even further.

JOHN MULVEY

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Bernard Sumner, showing off one of his "wimpy air punches"

NEW ORDER

USHER HALL, EDINBURGH, MAY 6, 2012

The bassist might be playing Hooky, but the technique remains impeccable...

"WHERE'S HOOKY?" IT takes only two songs for the Edinburgh crowd to raise the spectre of the missing bassist. New Order might have expanded to a five-piece but they are, crucially, still a man down. With Peter Hook revisiting various chapters of Joy Division's story with his new band, The Light, Tom Chapman has been drafted in to fill the void, with long-term auxiliary member Phil Cunningham adding further ballast on guitar and keyboards.

In light of these rather fraught developments, and with no new material on offer, the motives for this reunion tour look suspect. Is this a score-settling exercise, simple opportunism? And are New Order really New Order without their four-string lynchpin? In the face of lawsuits and ■ crossfire of recriminations, only the music can provide an answer.

In the event, New Order miss Hook's brawny theatricality but little else. Chapman wisely avoids impersonation, slotting in with confident ease. Bernard Sumner, meanwhile, has grown into an engaging stage presence, with his wimpy air punches and his little hopping dance, like a toddler who can't hold on much longer. On "Blue Monday" he skips over to join Gillian Gilbert at the keys while indulging in some spectacularly ropey dad dancing. The emotional thermostat these days, it's clear, is set to warm rather than chilly.

They begin in darkness with the instrumental "Elegia", from *Low-Life*, and move steadily towards a brilliant point of light. It takes some huffing and puffing to get there. Though the band's commitment to an aesthetic ideal is still evident – a video screen projects suitably enigmatic footage throughout – their clean lines have become blurred around the edges: an almost unrecognisably beefed up "586" sounds positively Kinksy, while on "Crystal" and "Regret", Sumner – a vocal featherweight if ever there was one – struggles ■ outpunch the bulky, guitar-heavy sound, not to mention ■ hangover picked up the previous night in Glasgow.

Gradually, however, they cut through. "Age Of Consent" is a euphoric rush framed by grids of white light and a frantically effective video of a woman dancing in a bathing suit. Similarly sharp, "Bizarre Love Triangle" sees Sumner dispensing with his guitar to pad around in his black suit and Adidas, like a louche bingo caller.

From there they're home and dry. "True Faith" is perfect, "Blue Monday" crisp and still thrillingly alien, while the closing "Temptation" – happily pilfering Lou Reed's "Street Hassle" riff – is simply immense, ■ succession of peaks provoking waves of communal hysteria. In its wake, an encore of Joy Division's "Transmission" and "Love Will Tear Us Apart" feels oddly perfunctory, as though these songs by a different band really belong to a different gig. By then, however, the point has been well made. Whatever their reasons for being here, these musicians are still New Order, whatever the old bassist might say.

GRAEME THOMSON

STUART WESTWOOD

SETLIST

1 Elegia
2 Crystal
3 Regret
4 Ceremony
5 Age Of Consent
6 Love Vigilantes
7 Here To Stay
8 Krafty
9 Bizarre Love Triangle
10 True Faith
11 586
12 The Perfect Kiss
13 Blue Monday
14 Temptation

ENCORE

15 Transmission
16 Love Will Tear Us Apart

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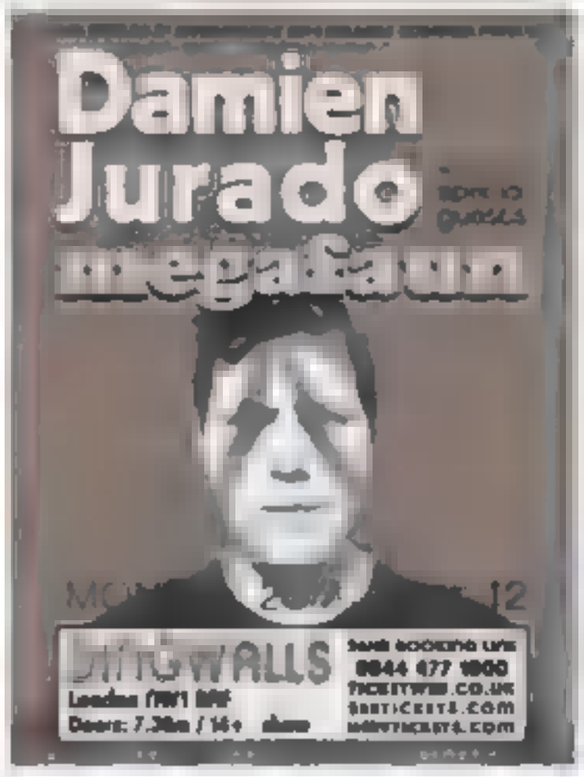

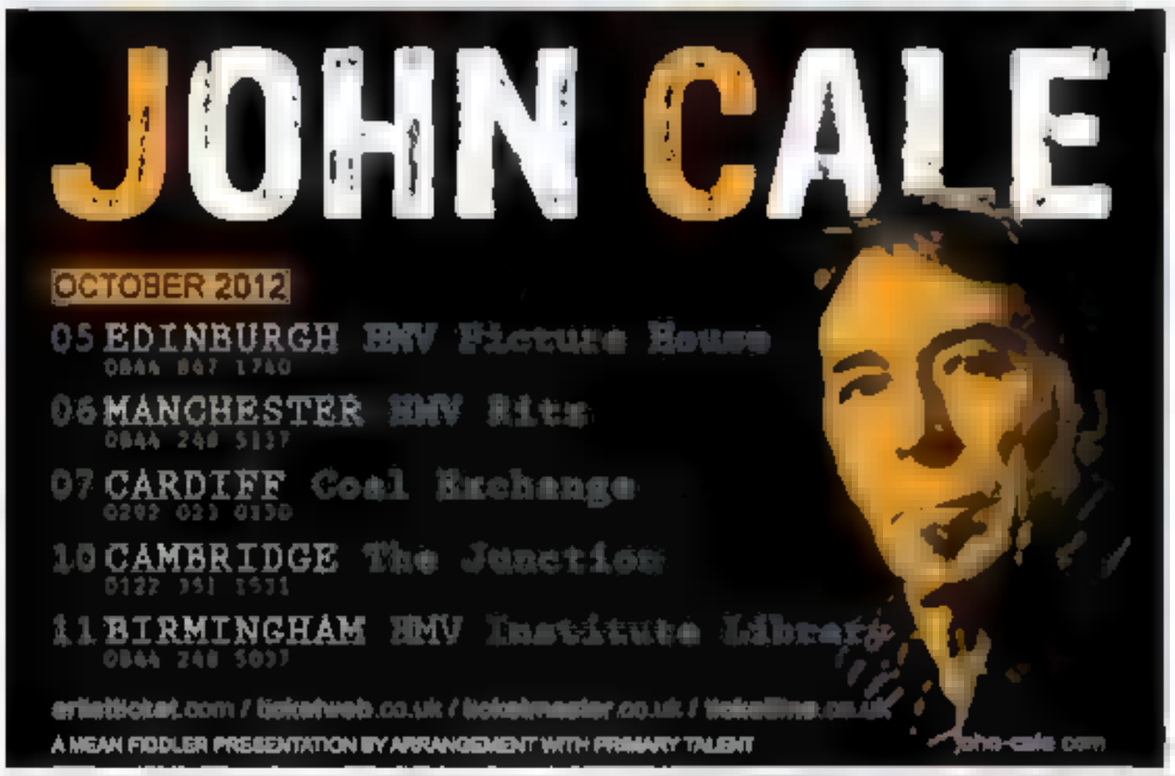

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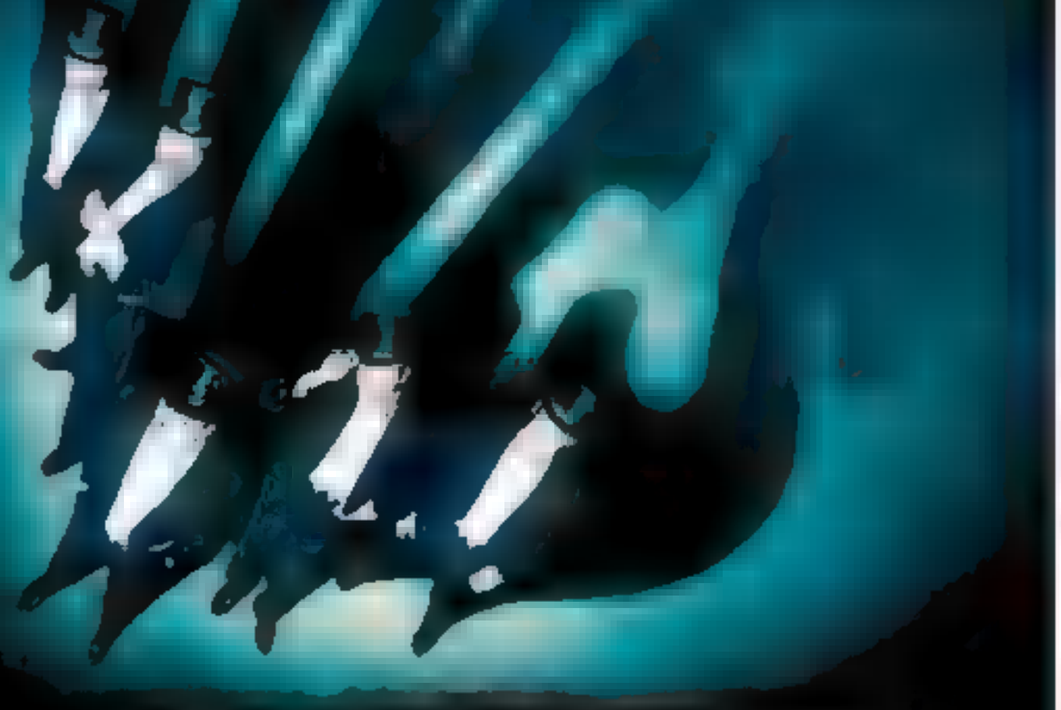

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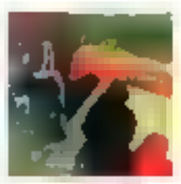

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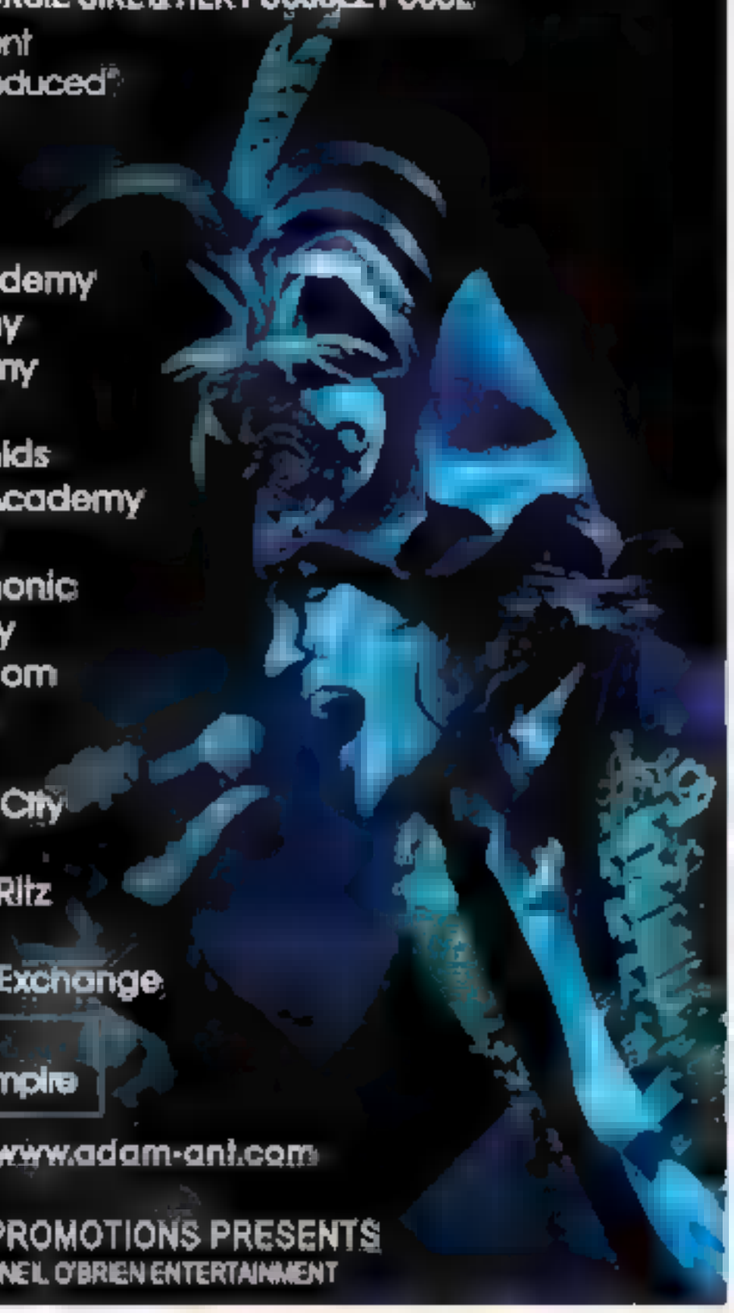

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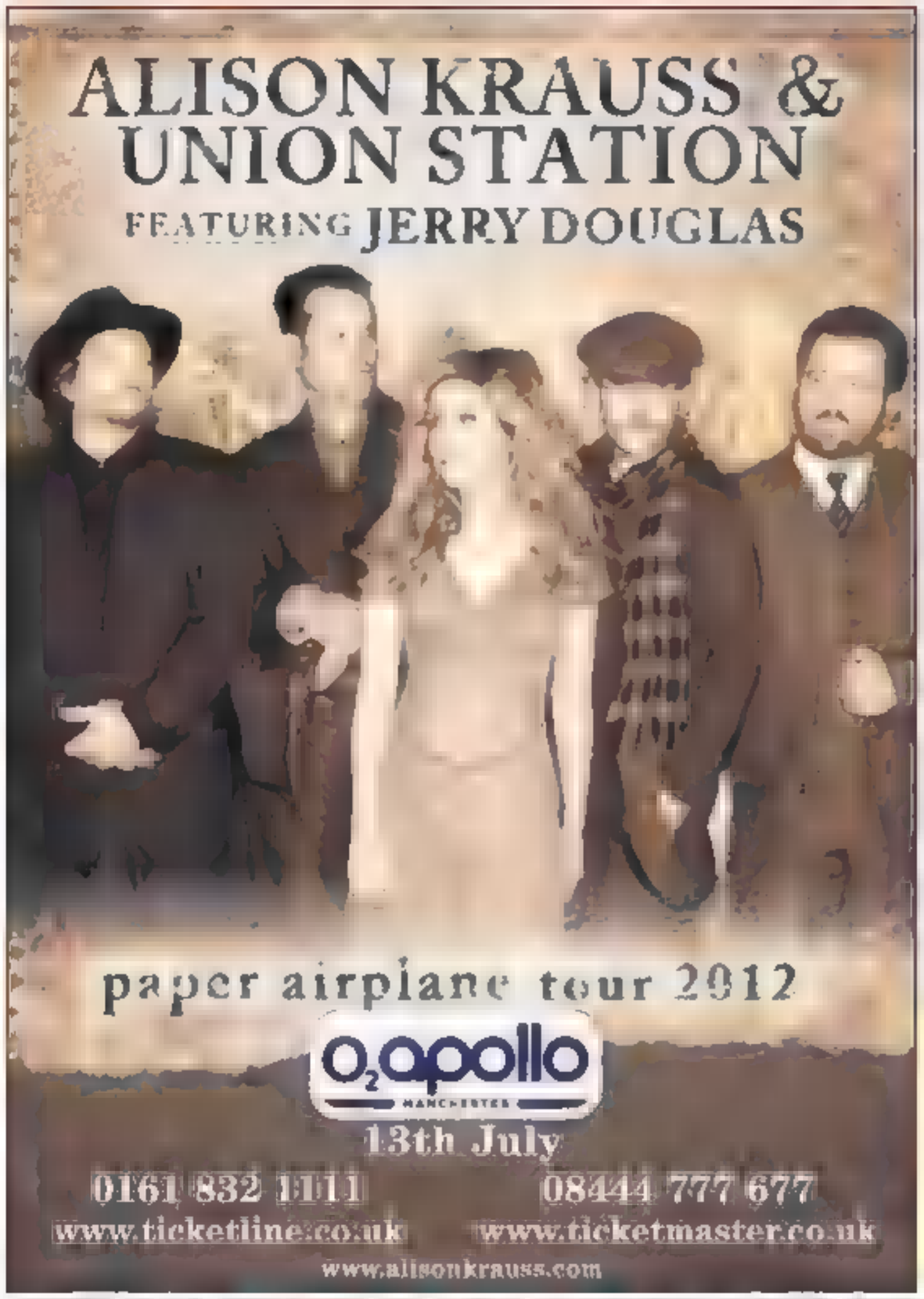

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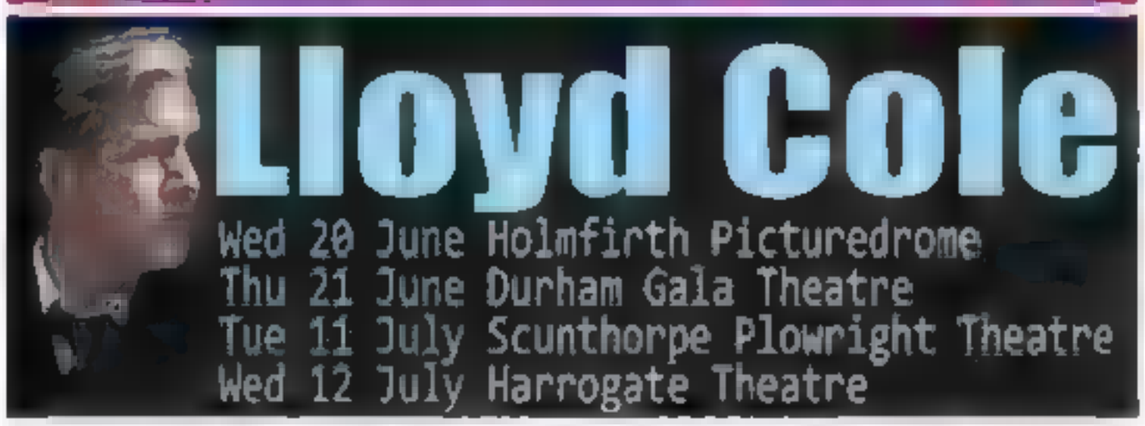

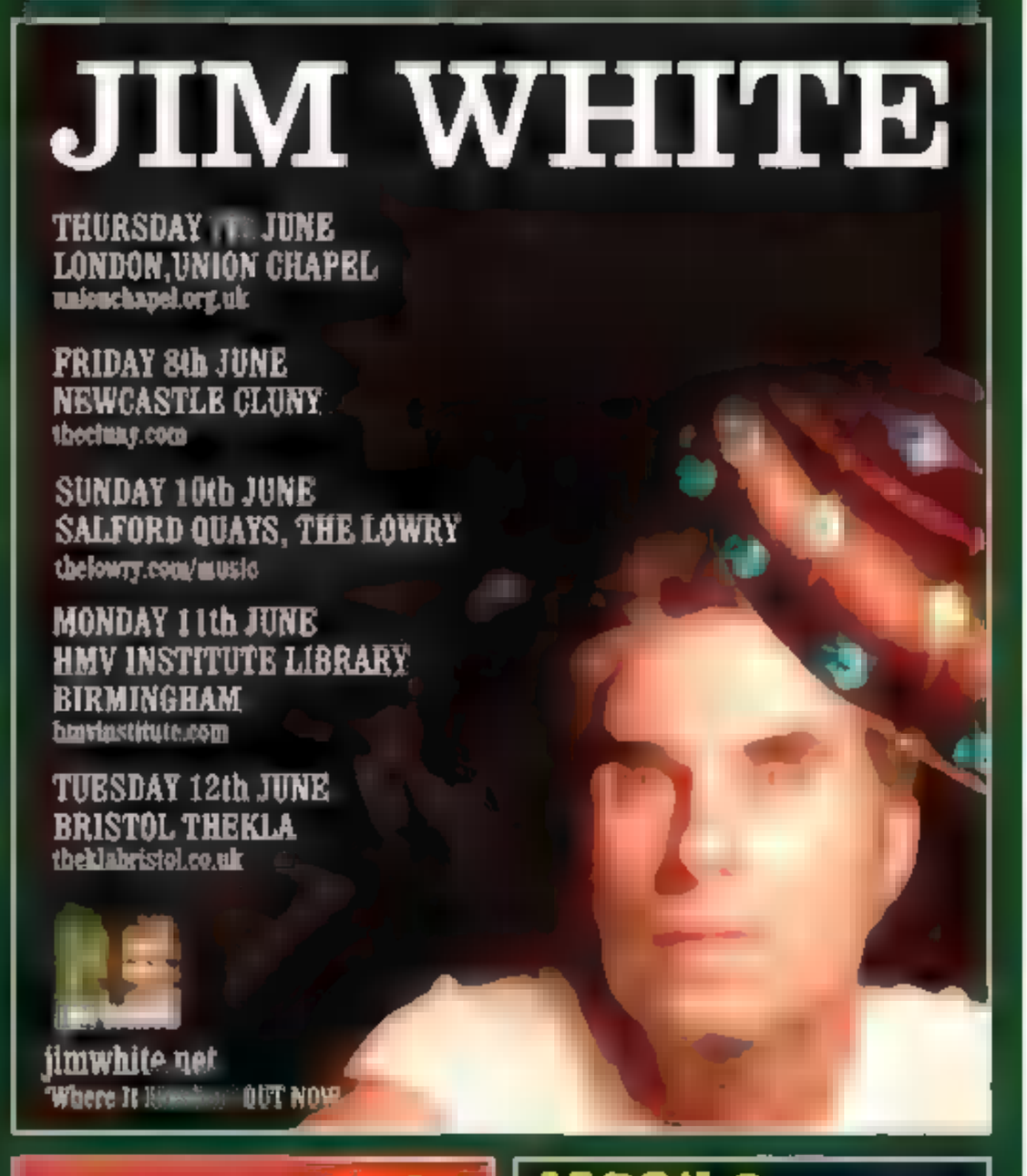

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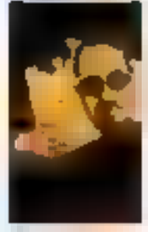
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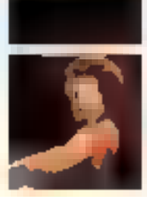
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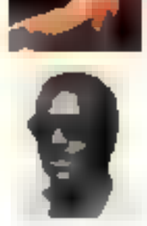
+ The Dustaphonics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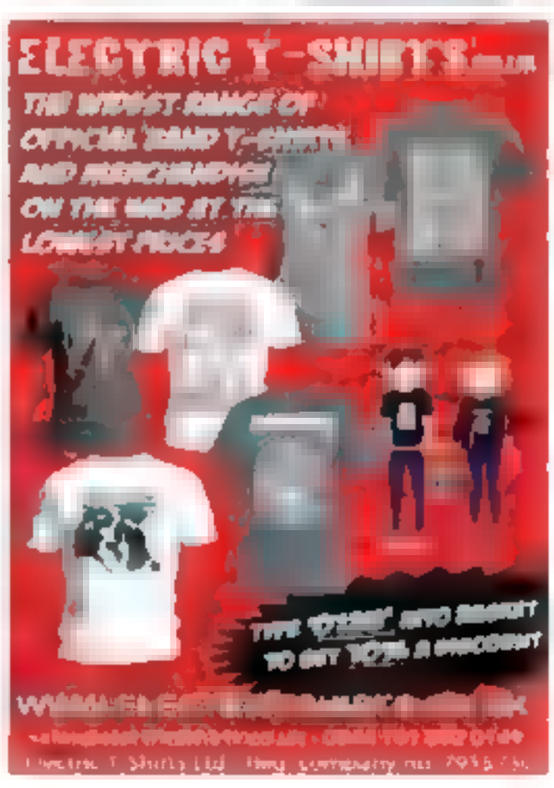

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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

ADAM YAUCH

Beastie Boys rapper and activist

1964-2012

THE FLOOD OF tributes that poured in for the Beastie Boys' Adam Yauch, who has succumbed to cancer aged 47, included a particularly poignant one from the Dalai Lama. "Adam had helped us raise awareness on the plight of the Tibetan people by organising various Freedom Tibet concerts and he will be remembered by his holiness and the Tibetan people," read a statement from the exiled Buddhist leader. It was not only a mark of Yauch's political and social activism, but also an indicator of the unlikely narrative arc of his life.

As co-founder of the Beastie Boys, Yauch initially came to prominence as one-third of American rap's first white crossover group. The rowdy juvenilia of 1986 breakthrough hit "(You Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Party!)" presaged *Licensed To Ill*, issued on Def Jam and the fastest-selling debut in Columbia Records' history, on which whip-smart raps about beer, girls and fast food goofed along to metal guitar riffs and kinetic hip-hop. The Brooklyn trio's lyrics, co-written with Yauch's high school pals Adam Horovitz (Ad-Rock) and Michael Diamond (Mike D), were full of deliberately obnoxious machismo. As were their notorious early live shows, which often involved flurries of four-letter words, dancing girls in cages and a giant inflatable penis. Such was the Beasties' reputation that several Tory MPs lobbied Home Secretary Douglas Hurd to have them deported during their first tour of the UK in 1987.

Yet the band were anything but the inner-city miscreants their image projected. All three hailed from comfortable middle-class neighbourhoods, with Yauch the son of a painter and architect. He began playing bass while still at school, before forming the first incarnation of the Beastie Boys, then a hardcore punk band, in 1979. Having opened local shows for the likes of The Dead Kennedys and Bad Brains, they started to embrace the new possibilities of hip-hop, employing NYU student Rick Rubin as DJ for live gigs. *Licensed To Ill*, produced by Rubin, went on to become the highest-selling rap album of the '80s and the first to top the Billboard chart.

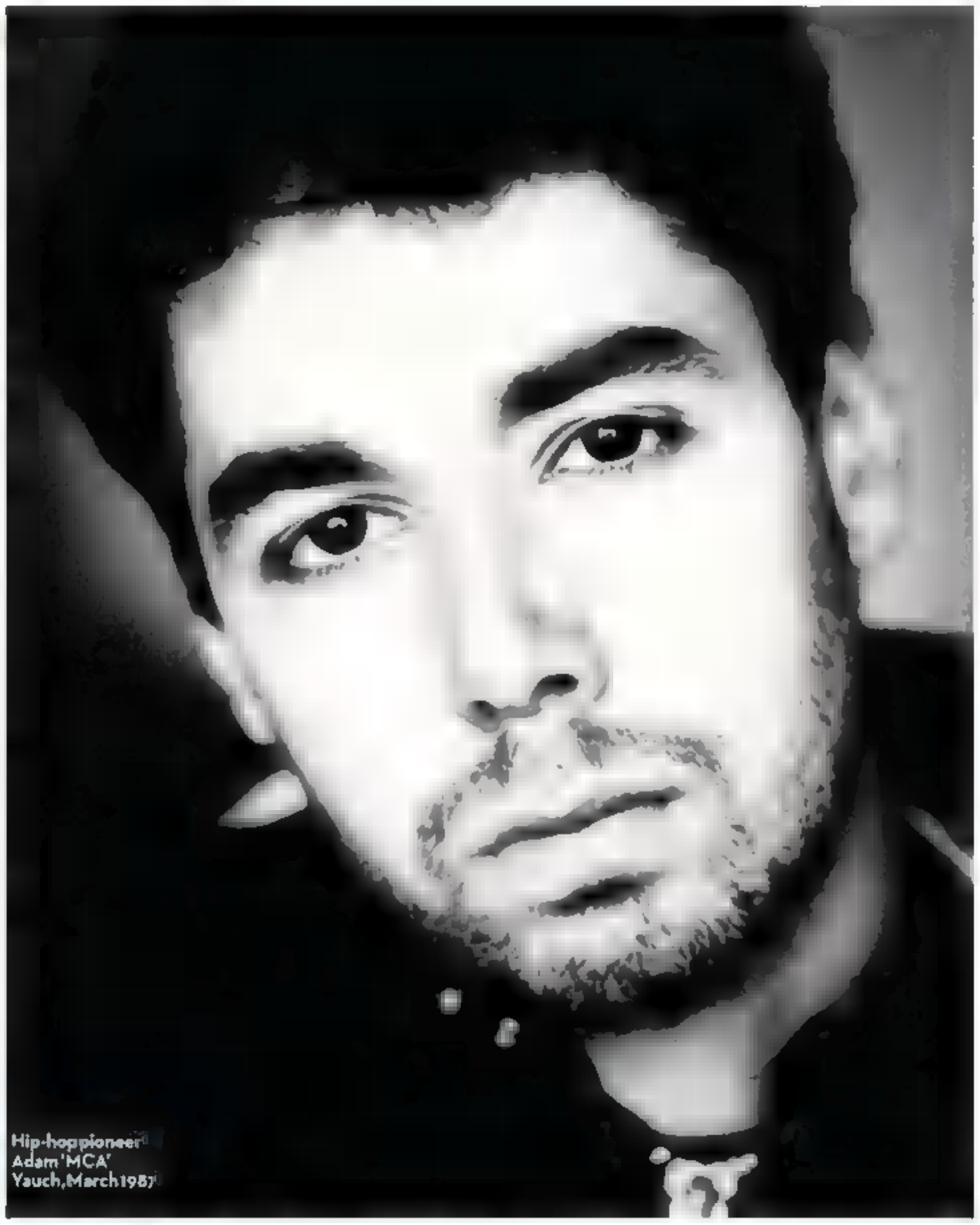
The follow-up signalled a stylistic shift in the Beasties' sound, an emphatic retort to those critics who'd dismissed them as little more than a fad. 1989's *Paul's Boutique*, the cover photo of which was taken by Yauch's alter ego Nathanial Hörnblowér (a name he also used as director of many of the band's videos), combined layered vintage samples and killer beats. Among its admirers were Public Enemy and Miles Davis.

Subsequent albums *Check Your Head* (1992) and *Ill Communication* (1994) offered further proof of the Beastie Boys' ongoing evolution, with more complex use of samples and socially conscious messages. "I really started thinking about our lyrics and how they affected people," Yauch explained later. "A lot of lyrics on our first two albums talk about carrying guns or being disrespectful to women. We looked at it as a fantasy, a cowboy movie, but I began to realise those things have a deeper effect, where people actually think that's who we are."

Ill Communication included "Shambala", a song that reflected Yauch's newfound interest in Buddhism, sparked by a trip to Nepal, during which he met a group of Tibetan refugees. In 1994 he founded the Milarepa Fund, a non-profit organisation pushing for Tibetan independence from their Chinese occupiers, and began organising the first of several Tibetan Freedom Concerts. The first, which took place in San Francisco in 1996, drew 100,000 people, the biggest turnout for a US benefit gig since Live Aid. The shows attracted such star names as REM, Pearl Jam and Radiohead.

As the Beastie Boys continued to make agile, inventively brilliant albums like last year's *Hot Sauce Committee Part Two*, Yauch became more immersed in filmmaking. In 2008 he formed Oscilloscope Laboratories, a production and distribution company, and directed *Gunnin' For That No 1 Spot*, a feature-length documentary about high school basketball.

Eminem, Thom Yorke, Madonna, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Chuck D and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg were among many who offered condolences on hearing of Yauch's death. "It's impossible to measure the influence Adam Yauch and the Beastie Boys have had on me personally and on hip-hop culture as a whole," said Def Jam president Joie Manda. "His legacy here is nothing short of iconic."



Hip-hop pioneer Adam 'MCA' Yauch, March 1987

ANDREW CATLIN

GREG HAM

Men At Work flautist

1953-2012

IT WAS TRAGIC that the most famous riff of Greg Ham, who has been found dead at his Melbourne home, became both his signifier and his persecutor. In 2009 a court ruled that Ham's effervescent flute line on Men At Work's 1982 hit "Down Under" originated from an old Australian nursery rhyme. The decision left him "terribly disappointed that that's the way I'm going to be remembered".

ANDREW LOVE

Memphis Horns sax player

1941-2012

STAX RECORDS CO-OWNER Al Bell once equated the emotive sax playing of Andrew Love to like "making love to your soul". Alongside trumpeter Wayne Jackson, Love provided the distinctive sound of the Memphis Horns, who featured on a welter of classic Stax releases, including Wilson Pickett's "In The Midnight Hour", Sam & Dave's "Hold On, I'm Comin'" and Otis Redding's "Try A Little Tenderness".

CHARLES PITTS

Funk-soul guitarist

1947-2012

CHARLES 'SKIP' PITTS backed up everyone from Wilson Pickett and the Isleys to Albert King and Rufus Thomas, but he will forever be remembered for the signature wah-wah riff that defined Isaac Hayes' 1971 hit, "Theme From Shaft". The song won an Oscar and heralded a career-long association with Hayes, Pitts serving as bandleader until the singer's death in 2008.

LLOYD BREVETT

Bass player and ska pioneer

1931-2012

THE EXPRESSIVE RHYTHMS of double bassist Lloyd Brevett formed the backbone of The Skatalites, the ska pioneers he co-founded in Jamaica in 1964. The group initially disbanded 18 months later, upon which Brevett began playing with The Soul Brothers, before eventually reuniting in the mid '80s. He went on to feature prominently on a pair of Grammy-nominated albums – 1996's *Hi-Bop Ska: The 30th Anniversary Recording* and the following year's *Greetings From Skamania* – before quitting in 2004. Among those offering fulsome praise was Bunny Wailer: "He was there from the beginning. All my basslines from all my recordings have been attributed to basslines from Lloyd Brevett."

DICK CLARK

Host of American Bandstand

1929-2012

THE INTRODUCTION OF rock'n'roll to US TV audiences can largely be attributed to Dick Clark, whose *American Bandstand* premiered on ABC in August 1957. Clark went on to front the show for three decades,

Bert Weedon: an inspiration to millions

Chris Ethridge: a key player in country rock

playing host to a cream of A-list talent that included Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Stevie Wonder and Smokey Robinson. As singer Paul Anka later noted: "This was a time when there was no youth culture – he created it. And the impact of the show on people was enormous." Clark's unflappable presentation style and boyish looks earned him the unofficial title of "America's Oldest Teenager" and led to work on other hugely popular TV shows like *The $10,000 Pyramid*, *The Dick Clark Show* and *New Year's Rockin' Eve* (1972-2003). Legendary Motown boss Berry Gordy credited him with being "an entrepreneur, a visionary and a major force in changing pop culture and ultimately influencing integration".

BERT WEEDON

Hit guitarist and author of seminal Play In A Day book

1920-2012

THE STARCHY INTRO to Bert Weedon's inaugural *Play In A Day*, published in 1957, promised that "this book will enable the reader to play guitar up to a standard suitable for playing in a jazz, skiffle, or dance combination." It might all sound quaint now, but Weedon's millions-selling manuals became seminal texts for a new generation of British guitarists and helped birth the '60s rock scene. Lennon, McCartney, Page and Clapton were among many who devoured his guides, the latter once offering: "I wouldn't have felt the urge to press on without the tips and encouragement that *Play In A Day* gives you. I've never met a player of any consequence who doesn't say the same thing."

Weedon began playing guitar aged 12 and was fronting his own bands by his late teens. By the '50s he was a jobbing session musician, serving on early rock'n'roll hits by Tommy Steele and Billy Fury, and backing visiting US icons like Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra. Regular appearances on radio and TV led to Weedon being offered a contract by Top Rank in 1959, upon which he became the first homegrown guitarist to make the British singles chart with that year's "Guitar Boogie Shuffle". Other hits that soon followed included "Nashville Boogie", "Twelfth Street Rag" and Jerry Lordan's "Apache", cut early in 1960 but only released after The Shadows' chart-topping version came out. Hank Marvin, another Weedon disciple, later paid touching tribute to his mentor on The Shadows' "Mr Guitar".

CHRIS ETHRIDGE

Burritos bassist and co-founder

1947-2012

THE ENDURING LEGEND of Gram Parsons has tended to obscure the key role that Chris Ethridge played in The Flying Burrito Brothers. 1969 debut *The Gilded Palace Of Sin*, one of the touchstones of country-rock, included two searing co-writes with Parsons: "Hot Burrito #1" and "Hot Burrito #2". As onetime A&M publicist Michael Vosse explained to biographer John Einarson: "Those two songs were totally Chris' ideas, and Gram was nimble enough to sit down with Ethridge and make it happen." Mississippi-born Ethridge had first met Parsons in summer '67, following work in Johnny Rivers' touring band. Charmed by this affable fellow Southerner, Parsons invited him into the International Submarine Band, where Ethridge played on the first landmark album of his career, *Safe At Home*. A year later, alongside ex-Byrd Chris Hillman and pedal steel wizard 'Sneaky' Pete Kleinow, the pair formed The Flying Burrito Brothers. *Gilded Palace Of Sin*'s other key element was its assimilation of Southern R'n'B, which Ethridge claimed he introduced to the fold by suggesting "Dark End Of The Street" and "Do Right Woman", two songs written by old friend Dan Penn. By the end of '69 Ethridge had quit for another stint as a sessioneer, featuring on Ry Cooder's self-titled debut, Phil Ochs' *Greatest Hits*, Gene Clark's *White Light* and The Doors' second post-Morrison effort, *Full Circle*. The Parsons association briefly continued for Gram's 1973 opus, *GP*, for which Ethridge co-wrote the classic "She". In more recent times he spent seven years with Willie Nelson's band. ***ROB HUGHES***

GILBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

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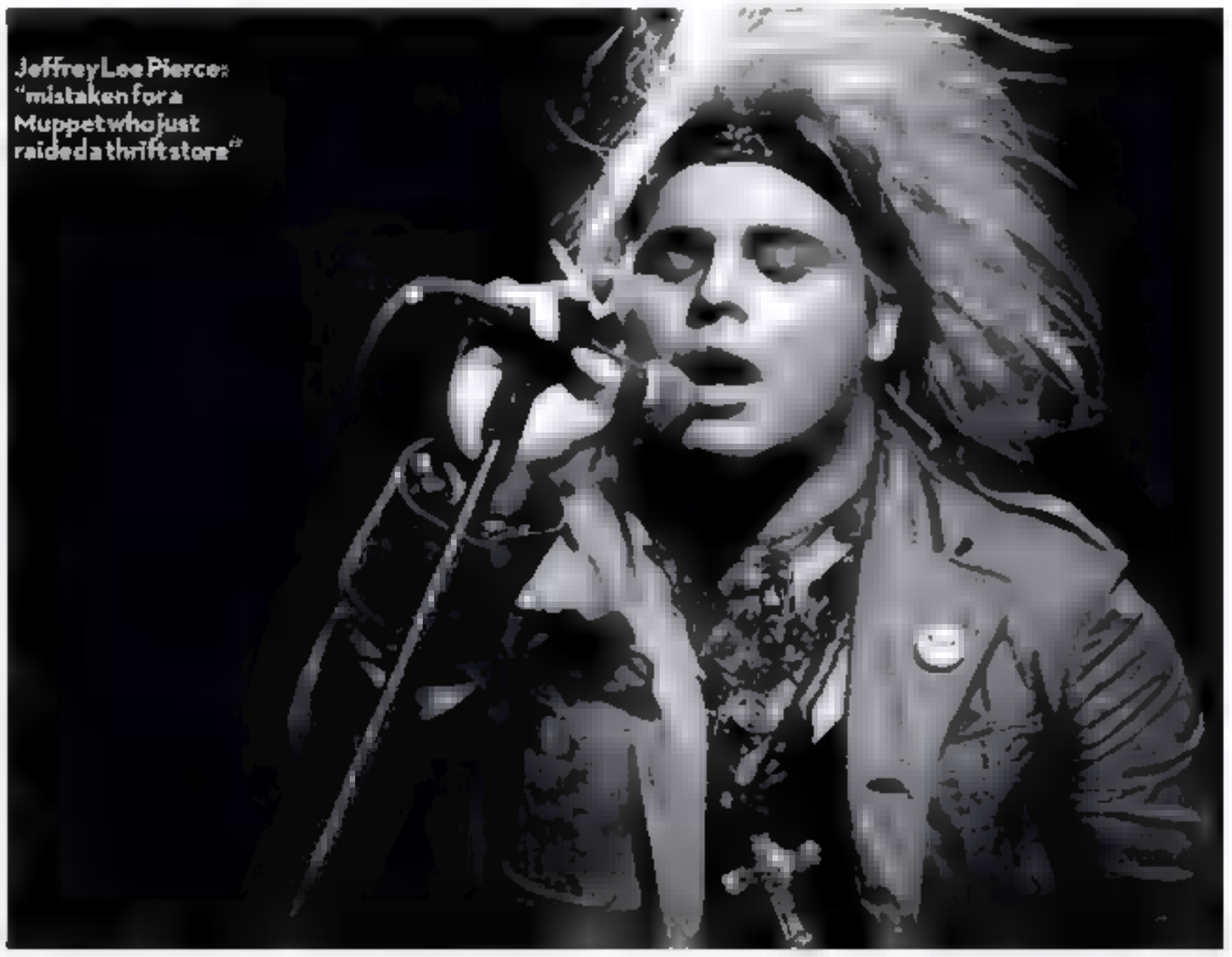
LETTER OF THE MONTH

L.A. STORIES...


Jeffrey Lee Pierce: "mistaken for a Muppet who just raided a thrift store"

I REALLY ENJOYED THE article on The Gun Club [*March issue*]. It was short and sweet, like a gig of theirs I witnessed around 1981. It was at Al's Bar, one of LA's seedier haunts. If I'm not mistaken, The Crowd opened (here's another band worth excavating). The venue (I use this word loosely) was in a neighbourhood that reeked of crime and despair and Al's was certainly nothing like the Cathay de Grand, Madame Wong's, Godzilla's or the Starwood. While we waited around for the doors to open, a beat-up old car pulled up across the street. It would've been a '40s model, painted flat black, huge wheel wells and in dire need of a wash. The car doors slowly opened, two or three people got out and went around to the boot and pulled out guitar cases. It was The Gun Club arriving to soundcheck, score drugs or both.

The Crowd played and it was an impressive high energy set from these Huntington Beach punks. Wendy O was in the audience, and her menacing guitarist next to her was also moving to The Crowd's high-energy punk-lite. The Crowd finished. There was a surprisingly short break to change equipment, and then The Gun Club took the stage like it was fucking Guadalcanal. No exaggeration. They slaughtered all 100 of us with opener, "She's Like Heroin To Me". We were close to the stage and took it all in. And I must admit, I was expecting sloppy, drunky, druggy musicianship. Man, was I wrong. Jeffrey's voice was in perfect pitch. The band was tighter than a bull's arse in fly season. In fact, if you just looked and didn't listen, it would be hard not to think that these guys were tossers. But that's the thing about punk; look sloppy, but play well. And that they did. Jeffrey patrolled the stage, wearing a furry overcoat until the heat forced him to shed it. And I think he was wearing a beret. He could've been mistaken for a Muppet who just raided a thrift store. But put the looks aside, and this guy just blew up onstage; singing his guts out, dropping to his knees then bolting up to a stance that challenged anyone to take him on.

I know I sound like a bragger here. But the truth is, I was into the LA music scene from 1980-1984 because it was so fun! I saw a lot of bands, some known, some unknown. How about this one; we're waiting for the Cathay de Grand to open so we can buy tickets for Ivy And The Elegants opening for the Minutemen. We wander into a Mexican restaurant for a burrito and a margarita. We order, eat, talk and listen to the mariachi band – so authentic, so pleasant, so uplifting. We would learn later that this was embryonic Los Lobos, singing for their supper. Stuff like this happened and I'm grateful I was one of those who witnessed it. Thanks for bringing back those crazy memories. ***Frank Bish, Gold Coast, QLD, Australia***

Our pleasure, and thanks for sharing those stories with us. – *Allan*

ONE MORE NUGGET

It was great to read the story of Lenny Kaye's *Nuggets* comp in your June edition. One of my favourite tracks, by Seattle's The Daily Flash, is an endearingly chaotic 1966 version of the old folk song "Jack Of Diamonds". After I wrote about the band on a blog earlier this year Jon Keliehor, their drummer, got in touch. He is putting together a CD of Daily Flash material, to be released in the summer. Their appearance on a typically bonkers episode of *The Girl From UNCLE* is well worth watching on YouTube. Lenny Kaye is right to be proud that we are still enjoying gems from *Nuggets*, more than 40 years on.

David Marsh, Newbury, Berks

THE BAND PLAY ON

My girlfriend, some friends and I went to see Simone Felice and his band in Whelan's recently in Dublin. Near the end of the set Simone called for a pint of Guinness – "that black magic potion", as he called it. When the pint arrived, he made an impassioned, beautiful speech about his friend and hero Levon Helm, then raised his glass. He told us how, as a child, he cycled his bike by Big Pink, how fortunate he was to play at two Rambles and even got to sing some verses of "The Weight" on one occasion. "He was pure soul, pure spirit and he will never die," Simone said. He then introduced a song he wrote with his brothers years ago about his grandfather passing: "Radio Song". The singing in unison of "*Please don't you ever die*" was a life-affirming moment. I couldn't think of a better way to honour Levon's memory than by being in the presence of great people singing as if their lives depended on it.

Eamon McGunness, via email

AMERICANA BEAUTY

I bumped into Allan Jones (almost literally) just before the recent War On Drugs set at London's Electric Ballroom and remarked how much *Uncut* has influenced my musical tastes over the last few years. I have to say that last month's free CD – *Americana 2012* – is probably the best one you've ever given out, with at least 10 artists whose work I am keen to explore further. So begins another chapter!

Gary Howchen, via email

A JUMPED-UP GANTRY BOY

In his reply last month to Alan Somerville's letter about *The Rock Machine Turns You On*, Allan Jones asked what happened to Elmer Gantry of Elmer Gantry's Velvet Opera. Gantry (not his real name, of course) ended up in the 'bogus' Fleetwood Mac that were put together by Mac's manager Clifford Davies, in alleged collusion with Mick Fleetwood, to fulfil a US tour in 1974 that the original band were in no position to make. Both seem to now deny any knowledge, but when the dust had settled, the 'bogus' Mac became Stretch, whose big hit was "Why Did You Do It?" a year later, and lyrically is addressed to at least Fleetwood, relating to the whole affair. Gantry recorded with and without Stretch subsequently, but they reformed in 2007, and had an album out last year. So there you are.

Pete Watt, via email

Thanks for clearing that up. – *Allan*

GLAM GRAMMAR

Being Swedish, I had a chuckle about the story 'Solid Gold Sleeve Action' in the May issue of *Uncut*. Pictured is the Swedish sleeve for Chicory Tip's single "Son Of My

DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Father" with "Englandshit" printed on the sleeve. I remember it from then. But the Swedish designer did not, as the writer states, have "some trouble with the phrase 'England's hit'". The word "Englandshit" is correct Swedish grammar with the 's' being a genitive 's'. In Swedish we do not use an apostrophe before the 's'. In English it would, I guess, have been "England's hit [*single*]". In Swedish a hit single can just be a hit. Also, in Swedish shit is spelled skit, so it does not have any double meaning. It is like the Swedish communities of Middelfart and Horred. They are more fun to English-speaking people then to us Scandinavians. Otherwise keep up publishing a great magazine!

Daniel Atterbom, Norrköping, Sweden via e-mail

I hope you'll excuse our ignorance of the genitive 's' in Swedish, Daniel. - *Allan*

AMERICAN STARS 'N' CARS

Congratulations on reaching the milestone of *Uncut*'s 15th anniversary. I have the latest copies of this month's music monthlies and I must tell you that you offer the best read of the lot. Happy Birthday!

I'd also like to mention that Neil Young is not the first rocker to use the image of Geronimo and three other Native Americans in a car. It features on the sleeve – and is the inspiration behind – Michael Murphey's wonderful 1972 album, *Geronimo's Cadillac*. The album's long been established as a classic and it is perhaps surprising that Neil, or someone in his camp, didn't recall this earlier usage.

Neil Bruce, via email

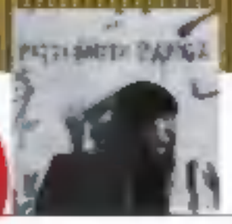
LOCALE HERO

Re: John Robinson's review of Richard Hawley's new album [*June issue*]. He should have done two minutes of research, as there actually is an area of Sheffield called Skye Edge. Strangely, John's description of a thundery and Zeppelin-esque location is not far off! You shouldn't underestimate place names. A mate of mine lives on Cockshutt Road. Another had the address of Swetepussie Way. The North will rise again.

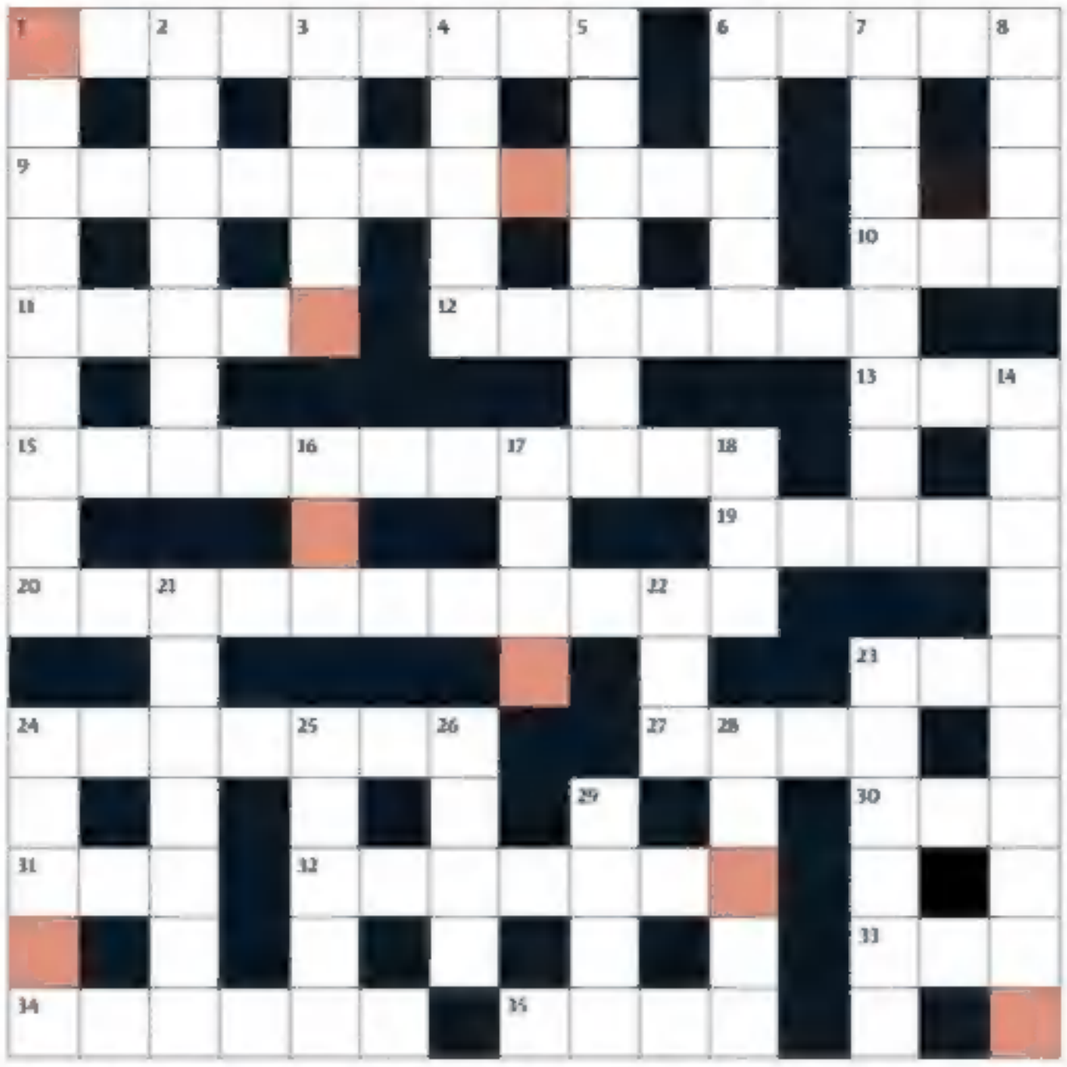
J Ridley, Sheffield

Apology: the credit printed for the photograph of John Lennon holding a *Red Mole* newspaper on page 53 of the August 2010 issue of *Uncut* incorrectly stated that the picture was taken by Rowland Scherman. The picture in question was taken by Joe Stevens.

CROSSWORD WIN



One of five copies of Patti Smith's new album *Banga* on CD



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Patti Smith. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut July 2012 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: June 29, 2012. This competition is only open to European residents.

ACROSS

1+21D For Fairport Convention to record another album was a big ask (2-7-7)
6 Rolling Stones number comes with a bit of Orbit chewing gum (5)
9 Cohort of Golden Nose Slim, Purple Pie Pete and Jungle Faced Jake (8-3)
10 (See 3 down)
11 Deviate from an Aztec Camera album to veteran rock band (5)
12 Lorraine _____, best known for a rendition of "Stay With Me (Baby)" (7)
13 They've recently taken off on *Le Voyage Dans La Lune* (3)
15 Used warm bit, perhaps, of The Psychedelic Furs (4-7)
19 She was born _____ Laurie Blue Adkins in 1988 (5)
20 Rang Den last about new Keane LP (11)
23 Title of LP thoughtfully communicated between Miles Davis, Millie Jackson and The Bee Gees (1-1-1)
24 (See 25 down)
27 A questionable performance by Soft Cell on this recording (4)
30 Record label that's housed Placebo, Verve and Smashing Pumpkins (3)
31 Nicely includes Eddy Grant's label (3)
32 *"Come tomorrow, will I be older? Come tomorrow, maybe a _____"*, from The Yardbirds' "Shapes Of Things" (7)
33 Slit on The Slits' album (3)
34+29D Cheer at hit version of Aerosmith number (3-3-4)
35 The state that CSNY got themselves in to with this protest song (4)

DOWN

1 *"Bows and flows of angel hair and ice cream castles in the air"*, 1969 (4-5-3)
2 John Lydon's band appear to be harsh with an Eric Clapton album (7)
3+10A 1957 hit that was originally titled "Cindy Lou" (5-3)
4+8D A Ramones album? Go and live somewhere else (5-4)
5 Firm title of Foo Fighters song (7)
6 Gaz Coombes is still a big noise going solo with LP *Here Come The* _____ (5)
7 Seen Kath moving around to the music of Shane MacGowan & The Popes (3-5)
8 (See 4 down)
14 *"Well, she's my cutie, my tutti frutti, my heart, my love, my bathing beauty"*, (4-6)
16 '80s indie band successfully formed from ex-members of Fire Engines (3)
17+26D Their fifth and final studio LP made them a *Laughing Stock* (4-4)
18 "So Why So ___" by Manics or "___ Songs (Say So Much)" by Elton John (3)
21 (See 1 across)
22 (See 1 down)
23 Terrible itches as Dutch act moved "To The Beat Of The Drum" (6)
24 *"City girls just seem to find out early, how to open doors with just a _____"*, from the Eagles' "Lyin' Eyes" (5)
25+24A 1995 Top 10 hit originally cut in 1951 by movie star Betty Hutton (3-2-2-5)
26 (See 17 down)
28 Swede who had 1976 hit with "Movie Star" (5)
29 (See 34 across)

ANSWERS: TAKE 180

ACROSS 1 Wrecking Ball, 8+31A Chelsea Girl, 9 Amnesia, 11+7D Nothing Ever Happens, 12 ELP, 13 King, 16 Man, 17 Smiths, 18 Head, 19 Tesco, 22 Ivy, 23 Pye, 24 Mikey, 26 Demon, 28 Stay, 29 Kayleigh, 32 Oasis.

DOWN 1+25A We Can't Dance, 2 Electricity, 3 Kissing The Pink, 4 No Angel, 5 Bran Van, 6 Long Road Home, 10 Steampacket, 15 Idle, 17 Shindig, 19 Teddy, 20 Sonnet, 21 My Eyes, 27 M.O.R., 28 Sha, 30 Go.

HIDDEN ANSWER
"Screwdriver"

Compiled by
Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

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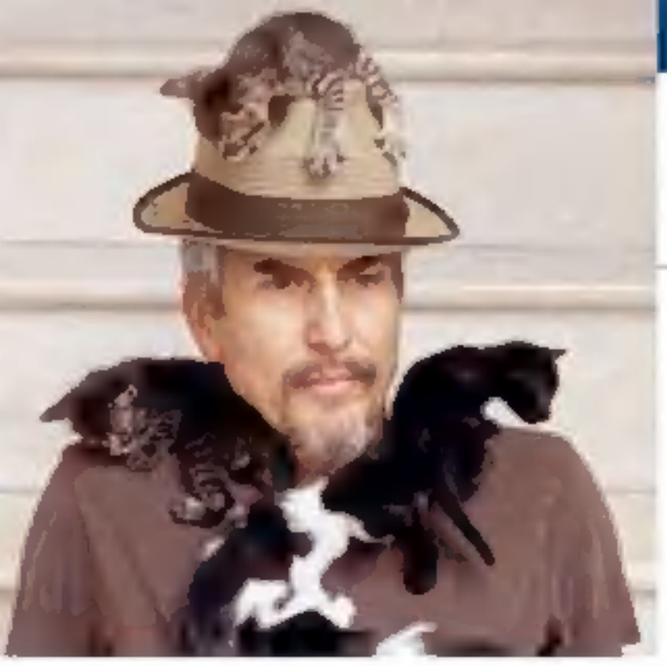


MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Howe Gelb

The Giant Sand man follows the "sonic threads calling out to you when you're young..."

The album I loved when I was 14

Sticky Fingers
The Rolling Stones 1971

This is all about the production value. I was drawn to it when I was 14, attempting to smoke Marlboro in the back room of the local pizza parlour on Friday nights. Jimmy Miller cleverly chopped the shit out of a lot of their jams, then edited them back together and added horns. Keith Richards was never happy with the work and the antithesis was *Exile On Main Street*, a year later.

The record that made me love pianos again

All The Way From Memphis
Mott The Hoople 1973

The first time I saw them was when I was 15, and an un-billed band called Queen opened up for them. Ian Hunter couldn't really sing, so I related to him because of that. Also, I was beginning to hate the piano – my first instrument – because it wasn't the sound of rock'n'roll, but in this track, they used it heavily, which allowed me to cling to the piano again.

An album of killer guitar

4 Way Street
Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1971

There's a couple of jams they recorded, and I've never heard guitar duetting like that before or since. It wasn't like Southern rock, where each player was trying to out-lick the other, it was more like a discussion between Stills and Young. Often it wasn't so much guitar riffs as just... blurts. And when Crosby – who was playing the rhythm chunks – also got in that circle, it was like a tribe.

My favourite male singer

Led Zeppelin IV
Led Zeppelin 1971

I swore that "Misty Mountain Hop" – one of my favourite songs ever – was written about us and the park we used to hang out in as kids. The way Robert Plant could deliver the poetry of those lyrics and make hooks out of, *"ooh, yeah, ooh-ooh yeah"*... they just stay in your head. That guy has probably the best male voice on the planet, ever. He has something going on that's real, mysterious magic.

My introduction to jazz

Live At Town Hall
Thelonious Monk 1959

I used to go to the record bins where every LP was 99 cents or $1.99 and would pick out the blues guys, like Champion Jack Dupree. Then I started scooting into jazz territory via Tommy Flanagan and Ahmad Jamal and eventually got to Monk. Whatever the thing was in Neil Young's guitar that clicked in my head, it clicked when I heard Monk play piano. It's in his timing, attack and personality.

A perfectly imperfect record

Blonde On Blonde
Bob Dylan 1966

The wonderful thing about this is all the mistakes. Listen to the bass player alone – man, he's really fucking up. And they didn't care. The thing that matters is the end effect. Those elements that make the song "incorrect" enable it to live forever. They make it impossible, and that impossibility continues to entertain and sticks with you forever. I've made a career out of no-correction myself!

The first country star

Blue Yodel No 1
Jimmie Rodgers 1928

His timing and guitar strumming are incredible; there's a couple of extra beats to the turn-around bars and instead of using a distortion box, he yodels. He wrote his own songs, too, which was a rarity. When you follow the sonic threads calling out to you when you're young, you need to find the source of the Nile, so to speak. In country music, it was Jimmie Rogers – even before Hank Williams.

The pathway to punk

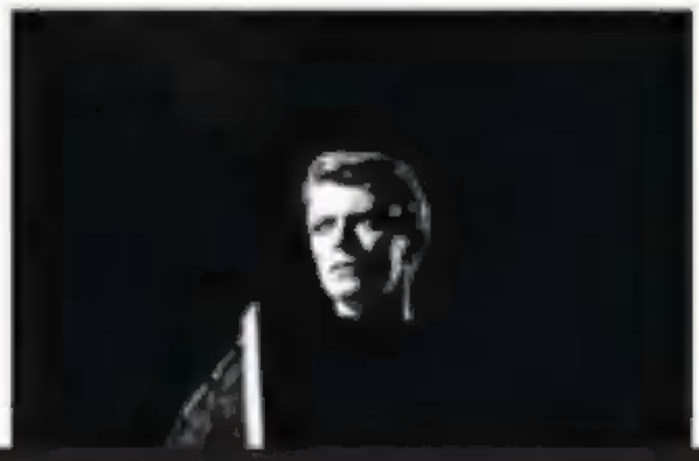
Ziggy Stardust
David Bowie 1972

I don't think we'd have the Ramones or Sex Pistols without Bowie. I'm a minimalist and on this you can hear every instrument separated; it's a small band, but the arrangement and performance is huge, and the writing... well, brilliant is an inadequate description. The chord changes in "Rock'n'Roll Suicide" – I can't even count 'em. The sound of this record is like nothing before or since.

Giant Giant Sand's new album, Tucson, is released June 11 on Fire Records

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT: *"They bust down the door and arrested everybody. There was a tank parked outside my house..."*

INTERVIEW: SHARON O'CONNELL



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